THE BOOKMAN

Edited by Seward Collins

MARCH, 1931 VOL. LXXIII; NO. 1

LAURENCE STERNE

by Edwin Muir

"They order, said I, this matter better in France." It is probably the most perfect opening to a work of English prose art. It sets the key, and determines the style, of *A Sentimental Journey*; it is irrevocable, like those first bars in a prelude which preordain all the forms into which a musical composition will flow. It raises us at once to the altitude where during the course of the book we shall be sustained; it has the inexplicable force of an incantation; and yet it is only a sentence of nine short words.

From a few words such as these the mysteriousness of Sterne's operation on our minds can best be realized; and any others might have served almost as well; for his operation is the operation of pure style. It is style that enchants or elevates our minds in reading *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*; style that creates the world contained in them. In all other English novels we can complacently separate form and content, treatment and subject-matter; but in these two books they are indivisible; there is no hiatus between intention and fulfilment, no even momentary absence of the utmost finish of skill to give us a glimpse of a writer sweatily wrestling with his material. They stand secure, on a different plane of perfection from all other English works of prose fiction, as complete triumphs of reason and imagination over subject-matter, that old enemy of the artist, some unsubdued vestiges of which are to be found in almost all novels.

Or Sterne's triumph might be expressed in another way: that from beginning to end his utterance is as completely in character as the part of a great comic figure on the stage. Nothing can disturb that sure inflection. He may lecture his readers, or argue with them, or flirt with them, or overlook them, or speak through the mouths of his characters; but he never forgets his own part; and his style, the shield with which he turns aside everything incongruous, remains polished and unassailable. This is the reason why, though he is far more ubiquitous than Fielding, his presence in his books is never intrusive or disturbing. He knew that everything in a work of art must be given a rea-

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son, and he made his position secure at the start by making himself appear indispensable to his characters. He invented for himself a void which only his own figure would fill; so that without him we feel that Mr. Shandy, Uncle Toby, Trim and the others would remain in eternal silence and immobility, and never think of all the things they say. He is their Boswell, but with more even than Boswell's ingenuity in eliciting curious conversation; a Boswell always on the level which the great biographer reached only once, when he asked Doctor Johnson what he would do if he were left at the top of a deserted tower with a newly born infant. "Sir", the Doctor replied, "I would feed it." And the reply, like the question, was pure Shandyism; for if the one starts almost endless themes for speculation, the other starts even more. Sterne's technique is to feed his characters with problems such as these, and busily note the result, appearing constantly at their heels as a benevolent secretarial familiar. And even out of this fictitious function he contrives to charm still another: that of the worried guardian. For he can never quite catch up with all his charges; he has constantly to leave one so as to run after another, or soliloquize despairingly on the impossibility of attending to them all, or appeal to the reader for help. Thus he finds a whole host of urgent reasons for appearing in the very center of the stage; reasons absurd in themselves, but perfectly valid; indeed absolutely essential to the plan of his book. While poor Fielding in his few appearances has something of the look of a gentlemanly intruder.

Yet this does not quite do justice to Sterne; and even here he shows not merely vastly greater finesse, but a stricter sense of literary justice than Fielding. For he takes care never to appear except in his literary character; except, in other words, as a stylized portrait of himself, imaginatively conceived like the other figures, and closer to Uncle Toby than to his own lay self. Fielding comes on simply as the self-conscious author, or the eighteenth-century English gentleman. His gesture is as disconcerting as that of certain music hall entertainers at the conclusion of a turn. For who has not felt discomfort or shame when, after watching for half an hour on the stage a figure universalized and heightened by paint and wig, punctually at the third call he sees a wigless, perfectly groomed, perfectly ordinary sweating young man scuttling out from the wing, his plastered hair glittering, and a well-bred but slightly embarrassed smirk on his face? So a precious illusion is shattered to draw attention to an irrelevant fact. And Fielding's introductory chapters do somewhat dispel the illusion and suggest the gentleman. Those manly and charming lineaments are presented to our gaze, and we are expected to remember them when in the next chapter the mere novelist steps on.

Novelists have a habit of stepping on at unforeseen moments in their own character; the novel is a tough and accommodating art and can stand it; yet it is Sterne's avoidance of this habit which puts him on his own plane of perfection in English fiction. For in appearing only as his literary portrait in *Tristram Shandy* it followed that he never indulged in the luxury of being himself; that not once did he claim the reader's sympathies in the touching rôle of a human being. He is never a man, a gentleman, a husband, a father, a citizen, a clergyman. From first to last he is impregnably encased in motley, and painted and wigged; every gesture, every intonation is stylized; and Laurence Sterne is completely resolved into an imaginative sublimation of himself. This entity, it is true, has a whole range of ideas, a whole gamut of emotions, exquisitely congruous with it; it feels hope, disappointment, contentment, pity; it laughs and weeps. But it is not really Sterne who laughs and weeps, but rather this double which at once follows the lines of its original and cancels them, like a mask fashioned by some master of the art

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of abstraction. But remember also that this mask is never laid aside even for an instant, that it usurps entirely the place of its original, so that that disappears in thin air—and the fabulous quality of Sterne's art, which every sensitive reader must have felt, becomes at once understandable. Perhaps the best analogy for Sterne's masked personality may be found among Shakespeare's court jesters; he is like those half fabulous beings who are never out of their motley, who, we feel, are not parted from it even when they are asleep, and who will die in it as they have lived. And because the call before the curtain never comes, because the paint and the wig have grown into skin and hair, we are automatically transported into a magical world, which consists in an everlasting performance conducted on the stage of some cosmic vaudeville or music hall.

This is Sterne's world; it is the world also of Shakespeare's humorous characters; but except for these no other English foot has ever entered it. For it is a world which can be opened only by the magic of complete masquerade. Masquerade or disguise, for disguise is a magical art. It not merely enables us to do things which with our own civil features presented to the world we would not allow ourselves to do, or dare not do; it not only gives us license to be irresponsible, undignified, outspoken; it also sets free in us a quite new and strange personality with a suppleness and daring of movement such as seems to belong to the dream world. Sterne is the freest of English comic writers, and freest in the sense of being the readiest, the most quickly, airily and subtly moving. His freedom is such that in it thought is indistinguishable from condensed fancy, and fancy from subtilized thought. Take his description of his meeting with the French lady at Calais. He had seized her hand, then it had escaped him, then he had captured it again. "The pulsation of the arteries along my fingers pressing across hers, told her what was passing within me: she looked down—a silence of some moments followed. I fear, in this interval, I must have made some slight effort towards a closer compression of her hand, from a subtle sensation I felt in the palm of my own—not as if she was going to withdraw hers—but, as if she thought about it—and I had infallibly lost it a second time, had not instinct more than reason directed me to the last resource in these dangers—to hold it loosely, and as if I was every moment going to release it of myself: so she let it continue." It is a passage worthy of Proust, but it is quite unlike Proust in this, that one cannot tell whether its exactitude is one of fancy or of observation. It moves along two routes simultaneously, and has a sort of enigmatical, interchangeable truth applicable equally to our world and a world of pure fantasy. But it also faintly recalls Donne's

> So to engraft our hands as yet
> Was all our means to make us one.

It suggests two things at once, the intellectual analysis of the modern novel at its best, and the intellectual imagination of the metaphysical poets. For as through pure, almost disembodied imagination Donne reaches truths about experience which we feel could be reached in no other way, so through intellectual fantasy Sterne seems to do somewhat the same thing. And, again like Donne and Proust, his aim is to find the intelligible and the spiritual in minute and curious manifestations of the physical; to bring a greater and greater province of experience under the rule of intellectual law.

So that perhaps this license to pause over trifling or minute things was the most valuable prerogative which the freedom of motley gave. For it allowed him to contemplate at his ease objects which Fielding with his instinct for balance and Smollett with his practical temper would have passed over with scorn: the transmutations of the homunculus, the size of noses, Uncle Toby's groin, and Widow Wadman's eye. It allowed him

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to show that "preference for the windings of his own mind to the guide-book with its hammered high road" which, Mrs. Virginia Woolf tells us, makes him "singularly of our own age". His eyes, she says again, "were so adjusted that small things often bulked larger than big". But in the perspective of the new world into which his paint and wig had got him it would be truer to say that everything, large and small, existed on an equality. For this world, being new, was not yet covered by the hard scales of custom and convention; the mind was free to consider every object in it; and so every point was an equally good starting point. And this ubiquity of interest is at the root of Sterne's humor, and nowhere more clearly than in the celebrated incident of Uncle Toby and the fly. To show this I may be excused for quoting again a passage which has been quoted so often already:

> "Go"—says he, one day at dinner, to an overgrown one which had buzzed about his nose, and tormented him cruelly all dinner-time, and which, after infinite attempts, he had caught at last, as it flew past him:—"I'll not hurt thee", says my Uncle Toby, rising from his chair, and going across the room, with the fly in his hand; "I'll not hurt a hair of thy head: Go" says he, lifting up the sash, and opening his hand as he spoke, to let it escape:—"go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee? This world is surely wide enough to hold both thee and me."

The force of this passage resides simply in an apprehension of a new relation, not the conventional one, between two living things; in a gentle and playful jogging of our minds, hardened by custom. Uncle Toby's action springs from a sudden intuition of justice, of justice in a relation which only Sterne's curious mind could have discovered, and not from mere maudlin feeling. And there is this intellectual justification behind most of the passages in Sterne which are blamed for their sentimentality, or condemned for their licentiousness. What gives their peculiar fascination to these two qualities as they appear in his work, what makes them radically different from mere sentimentality and mere licentiousness, is that they spring from imaginative curiosity. For the same insatiable intelligence which told him that asses and flies had their place in the universal frame, told him that the homunculus and the vital spirits had their place too; and what Thackeray called his "latent corruption" was often the seeing of things in a new and novel proportion, the perception that everything has its function, and deserves its share of attention from an unbiased mind: everything, homunculi and flies no less than asses and men.

It was Sterne's paint and wig and motley which got him into this rich and exhilarating world; these, and the new personality which they elicited in him. What were the main arts which this new personality employed to produce such far-reaching effects? They were not in the least subtle; they consisted of a few tricks as old as the vocation of the jester. One was the pose of having so many difficulties to overcome that one cannot get time to begin what one wants to do; another was that of having so much to tell that in following out this or that one loses the main thread. The first was the favourite device of Grock; the second, that of Miss Bates in *Emma*. Sterne rehearses again and again without getting tired Grock's little act with the piano. First the piano is too far from the stool, so, with great labor, it has to be shifted; then the stool is too high, then too low; then one's feet cannot be accommodated; then some other unforeseen difficulty arises; but that is overcome too, for one is resolved to play. Sterne never gets to the stage of sitting down permanently to his piece. With a great effort he does manage to get his hero born and misnamed; but then urgent interruptions crowd upon him: Tristram's parents, Tristram's uncle, the doctor who brought him into the world, the servants who assisted, have all to be attended to; for how is it possible to tell anything

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about Tristram if these are not disposed of first? But they are never disposed of; they are inexhaustible, endless, infinite; and even from them he is drawn aside by such things as noses, which turn out to be equally inexhaustible. It is this inexhaustibility of things as a spectacle which calls into action Miss Bates, Grock's garrulous twin. She suffers from an impossible discursiveness of interest. Everything that she names has the power of suggesting everything else; so that when she sets out to make a statement, she sets out to make every conceivable statement. Sterne checkmates her by a masterly employment of the periodic sentence, resulting in an unbroken series of Pyrrhic victories. So it goes on, with Grock peacefully and indefatigably obstructing the action, Miss Bates trying to say everything at once, and Sterne the stylist deploying his periodic sentence so skilfully that she is checked perpetually on the very frontier of incoherence.

From this analysis Sterne's method seems the most impossible ever invented by a novelist. In reality it was out of the impossibilities that he snatched the supreme triumphs of his art. For all his divagations are short cuts, and all his dilatory shifts only get him more expeditiously to his goal. The struggle with insurmountable obstacles, the perpetual losing of the thread of the story to get everything in, are his devices—perhaps the most economical ever invented—for building up an image of the infinite contradictoriness and variety of life. This image is produced, in other words, not by what is said, or by what is told, but by the very structure, the very form of the work itself; by pure style in the largest sense and nothing else. And the further one penetrates into this work, the more convinced one becomes that one can never exhaust the variety of his resources and stratagems. So he can as justly be called the most economical as the most leisurely of writers, the most perfect master of form, as the novelist least concerned with it. But about his mastery of form there can really be no doubt. For two things are clear: that he did with consummate mastery exactly what he wanted to do; and that one cannot imagine the pattern of his books as being other than it is; it may appear arbitrary, but it is clearly inevitable.

Yet it has a very peculiar kind of inevitability, the inevitability of a maze which while following out the most exact laws of form seems to our confused eyes continuously to evade and so deny them. *Tristram Shandy* is probably the only novel in the English language which is humorous in its very structure, which is humorous, that is to say, through and through. And this means that what Sterne created was not merely a few comic figures inhabiting the world of ordinary existence, as Fielding and Scott and Dickens did; but a comic world, a world in which not merely his human figures, but everything, from man down to the homunculus, was drenched in humor. That world is as much a creation of the poetic genius as the forest of Arden or the wood near Athens. And this is no doubt why Uncle Toby and Mr. Shandy have been so often called Shakespearean: they live like Falstaff and Bottom in a world of free comic entities, and not in the world of actual knocks, like Fielding's Partridge, or Smollett's Commodore Truncheon. They are not figures of comedy in a picture of society, but naturals of humor in a world of universal forces. We can think of them ambling through Shakespeare's woods and fields. And we can think of no other figures there except Shakespeare's own.

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THE LAST DAYS OF KATHERINE MANSFIELD

by Olgivanna (Mrs. Frank Lloyd Wright)

She stood in the doorway of our main dining-room and looked at all and at each with sharp, intense, dark eyes. They burned with the desire and hunger for impressions. She wanted to sit down and eat with all the students, but someone called her to a different dining-room. I asked whose that wonderful face was—I did not notice her body. "She is a writer, an Englishwoman, her name is Katherine Mansfield." I wanted to know her.

This was in Fontainebleau-Avon, at the Gurdjieff Institute for the harmonious development of the human being. There were men and women from various countries, several from Russia. There were doctors, painters, dancers, writers, musicians. All believed that the possibilities of development, knowledge, and achievement are much greater than those already achieved; that interior life—through self-control, through non-identification with the ever-changing states of one's being; through sacrifices, through never-tiring efforts to understand more and do more, through willingness to suffer more when needed—can be made real, can be made even immortal.

But immortality is far beyond. Let us say we aim to be real: let the conscious "I" be in the center and there direct our actions harmoniously until we find the rhythm of Principle. But even this is far in the future. Just to be a completely developed human being, to have our mind, emotions, movement, body, mechanism, in well-proportioned order, is a difficult task. And most of us, indeed, are still far from even that.

So this, in short, was our work in the Institute and we were reaching it by way of ordinary life: in the gardens, in the kitchen, doing housekeeping, farming, until the day's work to keep up the Institute was done. In the evening we worked in movement, exercises, memorizing, concentration. There were some, weak physically, who did very little; some who did nothing. They were only in touch with the ideas and life that interested them. To these latter belonged Katherine Mansfield.

This class was not bound by the rules and duties of the Institute life, or, if they were, it was to a very small extent. In some ways their life was separated from ours, and they had a separate dining-room because, of course, they required different food. Many a time, later on, Katherine Mansfield had expressed her deep wish to eat in the Russian dining-room with the others, but, to her great disappointment, she never did.

She was very ill indeed. I learned that a great many prominent sanatoria had closed their doors to her under various pretexts. Hotels, of course, refused her. She was in the last stage of tuberculosis. She was soon to leave this world, probably in a few months. One of the most humane acts Gurdjieff ever did was to accept her into the Institute.

I told him what a lovely face she had and

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how much I liked her. "You take care of her," he said. "Help her all you can."

I knocked on the door of her room. She was sitting by the fireplace. Very white face, dark hair cut short, "bangs" over her forehead, fine nose and mouth, a delicate chin. But the eyes! Just as intense as when I saw her first looking into the dining-room, avid for life, for impressions. And this is what called to me. Again I did not notice that she had a body.

"My name is Olgivanna," I said.

"And I am Katherine, please. That is all, just Katherine. Won't you sit down?" She motioned with a very pale, slender hand which opened half way, with the fingers put together: a very shy and restrained gesture.

"I will bring you some wood to make you warm first."

I was deeply touched by her loveliness, more so because I knew of the inevitable end that she was soon to reach. When I left her room I leaned against the wall for a few seconds. Why had she to die? For the first time in my life I saw one who was near death, one with such living eyes, so young and beautiful. Something became outlined in my mind. I understood her need.

I came back with the wood and sat down. We both looked at the fire in pleasant repose.

"What do you do in life?"

"I am a writer."

"Do you write dramas?"

"No." It sounded as though she were sorry she did not.

"Do you write tragedies, novels, romances?" I persisted, because she looked as if she should write these.

"No," she said, with still deeper distress; "only short stories; just short stories."

Later on she told me she felt so wretched at that moment she would have given anything if she could have answered at least one "yes" to the "big" things.

"I would like to read your stories," I said.

"I will get them for you, but they are not much. I have not written yet what I would like to write. Some day I will; that is ahead of me. But please tell me about yourself; how long have you been in the Institute?"

"About four years. First at Tiflis, then at Constantinople, then Berlin, Dresden, Paris, now Fontainebleau-Avon."

"How interesting it must have been. I wish I could have been with you then. And did you work as hard all the time as you do here?" And she looked at me almost with sympathy.

I smiled. "Oh, I never work hard enough. I am very lazy. I could do infinitely more. We did various kinds of work. Sometimes we would do only exercises, studying new movements all day. And then I had my own work to do. I had to learn how to cook and sew and clean. You see, I did not know any of those things, and they are interesting and quite necessary."

"Indeed they are." Now she smiled. "And will you tell me where you learned to speak English?"

"I had a governess in my early youth. Later I studied by myself; that, too, was part of my work in the Institute."

"Your choice of words is better than that of most English people."

"Thank you."

I had to go. I put another log on the fire, and as I did so Katherine leaned forward and slightly touched my head.

The next day was a beautiful fresh October day. The white clouds were playing with the sun. I came into Katherine's room with a little bunch of flowers that I "stole" from under Miss Merston's sharp eyes.

"I have already committed a crime for you. This is the stolen treasure. I will put them behind the carafe. Not a word to anybody!"

"How lovely. Isn't this a real 'good morning' for me?" At that moment the sun came from behind the fluffy white cloud and flooded the room. Katherine made a step towards the window. "This sunlight is just like you. It comes in the way you came in,

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and I know I feel that today is the beginning of a new life for me. It is wonderful. Could you go out for a walk with me?"

We walked slowly down the garden path. We had to stop every little while. Katherine's breathing troubled her. We sat down on a bench. I played with the sand. People went by, some with spades, some wheeling wheelbarrows. Everyone greeted Katherine with a friendly smile.

"Really, Olgivanna, I have not felt so well in years. It is such a relief to see healthy people about me. Even the sky seems to me a healthy blue and as though it belonged to me more. I mean, I feel more entitled to it. What has disturbed me lately is that I felt apart from everything I loved, as though it was all to be denied to me—the very life, I mean, that I want to live. But here today I am back with it all, and more than ever I feel that I can build up a life within me which death will not destroy."

"And here is everything to help you do it," I was eager to say. "There is no death for one like you who perceives the possibility of sweeping death aside when the time comes as an unnecessary phase to go through. You, I see, treasure the substance of life, not 'living' itself; therefore your body is only a medium through which you receive the thing you love most. And if you learn how to keep it, your body then has no more significance, you are not interested in what may become of it, disease, destruction, death, or life. They all are only phases of life."

"Exactly. At last I have it clear; the only truth I really care about. It was flowing in my subconsciousness, it tortured me, but it never came up to the surface. Now I see the reality of it. I feel it as this sun that is warming my face and hands." Her head was bent down, her hands resting on her knees, receiving the light of the sun as though listening to new life emerging from within.

The busy days went by. Katherine Mansfield made many friends. She would often go and sit down in the workshop to watch the lawyers, doctors, and decorative painters do the carpenter work. She praised those who had precision of movement, whose hammer fell always on just the right spot, or when the saw cut the board in fine, even lines. She would go to the chicken-yard and watch and decide who was the one who was the best with the chickens; and she was interested to know how many chickens were hatched. She remarked upon what a fine rooster the new one seemed to be.

She asked me once to give her some corn so she could feed it to them. And when the big army of chickens went rushing to her and surrounded her from all sides, she cried out in childlike joy. "Oh, this is wonderful! I feel terribly important. Please get me one. I want to pet it."

I managed to catch one after many failures and much running, and we both laughed. It was all gay, happy, full of sound and sun.

Gurdjieff built for Katherine a terrace in the cow-stable right over the cows. The air of the cow-stable was supposed to be good for her illness. Our best painter, Alexander Zalzman, painted the roof over the terrace in gay patterns of trees and flowers, animals and birds. He caricatured some of the people of the Institute in the faces of animals and birds, himself included. The floor of the terrace was covered with fine oriental rugs and cushions. Katherine simply adored that place. She never ceased to express her gratitude to Gurdjieff for all that he had done for her. She would spend two or three hours of each day there. And when I could find time in between my duties I would run into the cow-stable and up to the terrace, always to find Katherine half-reclining in a most delightful state of repose.

"How I wanted you to come. I must have hypnotized you," she said one late afternoon, sitting among the cushions of that most charming, fantastic little terrace. The cows were chewing rhythmically, the odor of the hay was sweet and soothing. The twilight was approaching, and the narrow line of the

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sky was turning deep red. "I should not break this silence. But, Olgivanna, this life is so beautiful. I want to speak, I must speak, I wanted to see you so. I want to tell you, I want to ask you how could I have lived before, without knowing that this existed? What were all my teas and dinners and people, my writing—yes, my writing, too—in comparison with the *real* life that I find here? What were all the doctors in comparison with you? At your very approach I feel better and stronger. And when you go I am left with so much energy that the legion of doctors could not give me a tiny drop of it with all of their prescriptions and pretensions."

"Why, you should not say that. It is not I; it is you, your own effort not to put too much weight in the life of the body, your own capacity to take the highest form of life wherever you see it or feel it, that gives you the energy. I am just one medium of life, and you have found the way in which I am most useful to you, that is all."

Mrs. O. came in to milk the cows. She was tall, beautifully proportioned. She wore a black dress of an old German style, tight in the waist and around the breast, with the skirt flowing down in rich folds. Her beautiful head was tied with a black scarf. A gentle smile, sad and lovely, was always on her lips. The gray-blue eyes looked into the distance with just a little touch of fear in them. A superior face. And what arms! Plastic, graceful, with the wrists softly curved into the long-fingered hands. Those hands began to milk, evenly, rhythmically; her head pressed against the cow's body. The cow stood perfectly still.

Katherine had a great admiration for Mrs. O., who could not speak English. They often conversed with smiles and gestures.

After Mrs. O. left, Katherine again broke the silence. "I think she is splendid. I am certain that the cows are in a state of exaltation while she is milking them! They must experience a super-cow-sensation, if they are at all decent cows!" We laughed.

"And I always envy Mrs. O.," I sighed. "I do want to milk the cows so much, but I never have been trusted with that work. What do you suppose the cows would think if I milked them?"

"Well," Katherine looked at me, putting her head on one side and looking down at the cows, "you know, I think that if you milked them they would smile a little, but they would like it. It would be a very unusual experience for them, I am certain, because you somehow are too different from their ideas of the personalities they come into contact with through milking. You see how much I know? I almost feel like writing an essay on 'The Psycho-Analysis of a Cow'."

But there were days when Katherine felt very low. And the cause was, almost always, that she was not what she would like herself to be. "I am wicked, Olgivanna, terribly wicked. I shall never be able to change. Why should I dislike some people to such an extent that it is simply nauseating to me? Mrs. N., for instance. Even meeting her in the corridor is enough to spoil my whole day." As she said this she was sitting up in her bed, playing with the ribbons of her bed-jacket. She looked fragile, anxious, and beautiful. "Olgivanna, why are you smiling?"

I got up and brought her a mirror. "Look. You see how nice and sweet you look."

She blushed like a child. "Why, what do you mean?"

"I will tell you. I mean that if feeling so 'terribly wicked' you can look so sweet, your wickedness surely is not so very serious. Evidently your physical likes and dislikes do not affect the real You. And that must mean that you are on the right way, even if you yourself do not know it yet. You will always have your physical functions; you cannot throw your body away, but your attitude toward your physical likes and dislikes has changed. And I know that at this moment you are ready to smile together with me at your dislike of Mrs. N. After all, the poor woman is not guilty of anything."

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Katherine covered her face with her hands. "I am a fool, and I don't want you to see me smile. Don't look at me." And she laughed. (She knew I disliked Mrs. N. myself.)

"I will tell you something worse that will make you laugh more. Guess what new work I am going to have this week."

"Milking the cows," she burst out with joy.

"No," I said very sadly. "Far from such honor. I am going to take care of the pigs—Mr. and Mrs. and dozens of little ones."

"Pigs? Take care of the pigs? Oh, it isn't possible!" She was very much concerned. "Pigs! But what will they do with you? Or rather, what will you do with them, I mean? Or both? Incredible!" Laughter quivered in the depths of her eyes.

I went on sadly. "Those pigs are such strange animals. Madam O. said to me that they are very intelligent and that it will be quite interesting for me to get acquainted with them. But I don't feel like meeting them at all. She is so enthusiastic about them, but somehow that does not give me any encouragement."

"My poor Olgivanna, we simply must do something about it! I have an idea." Her eyes flashed. "After everybody goes to bed tonight, you and I will go out, open the back gate into the street, and chase the pigs out. They will wander into the Avon and somebody will steal them. And tomorrow morning I will innocently tell the people that when the pigs learned that Olgivanna was to take care of them they simply could not endure the idea of such high privilege and decided to go and seek a more commonplace life."

My week with the pigs proved to be a complete success. Katherine came down every day to watch me feed them. She insisted that she saw old Mrs. Pig come to me after each meal and wipe her nose on my apron. "Such insolence," she said. "Oh, do kick her once, for my sake. But you know, I must say they are much fatter; you do splendidly with them."

Most certainly I was delighted to hear *such* praise! It quite compensated me for the care of the pigs. Meantime the building of our study-house was well on its way. The walls were up, and the roof was going on. Again no workmen were being employed. All was being done by our own people. It was fascinating to have a share in actually building something. And one morning I myself felt somewhat weary and restless. I straightened Katherine's room, talked with her as usual, being as careful as I could be in everything I did or said. But underneath it all she felt my restlessness. I wanted to go to help in the building of the study-house. I wanted to go and work in the cold, fresh air; I wanted to be part of the activity, hear the sounds of the hammers and shovels and wheelbarrows. And I clearly saw that Katherine wanted me to stay with her.

"It is a bad day," she said, "it is so gray and cold. I have been so cold." The wood logs were red in the fireplace.

"I will go and bring you some more wood."

"Oh, no, there is plenty."

But I went. My heart was heavy. I had nothing to give. I came back with the wood, warmed my hands by the fire. I looked straight into her eyes. "Katherine, would you mind if I go out to the study-house? I want to go and work there for a while."

She turned her eyes away, and with that familiar gesture of the hand with the fingers put together, she said, "No, indeed. Why shouldn't you go?" But I knew if I stayed another minute she would cry—and I ran out. I did not come back all day. Why did she want me so that day? Just that day when I felt that my supply of energy was too limited to be of any value to her? Her Soul was lonely and fearful. She called to me, and I heard it but could not stay. In the past weeks my life seemed to be an unbroken string of effort and work that started in the early morning and went on late into the night. Many of my nights, until two or three o'clock in the morning, or even later, were spent in Katherine's room. She could not sleep, she told me. So,

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at first noiselessly, I used to come into her room after everybody had gone to bed, and found her sitting up, looking at the red, blazing coal of the fire.

Many nights I spent there sitting on a little low stool by the fireplace. Sometimes listening to her, talking a little, most of the time dozing, until I saw her fall asleep. Many, many nights. It was my own choice. I tried to go to bed at the same hour the others did, but just as the sweet state of falling into sleep would begin to overcome me, I would see Katherine sitting up by the coal of the fire, sleepless. How could I leave her like that?

But that day I left her. I spent it in oblivion of all sorrows. Just in the mere physical motion of gathering old leaves and bringing them to the study-house, or painting the windows. That day I lived like an automaton who does not have to help to rescue a human Soul, or does not have to try to destroy evil, or inspire peace, or justify any purpose: just an automaton living in mere physical motion —letting all human problems go.

Towards the evening I approached the door of Katherine's room. I hesitated before it. I felt miserable.

"Come in."

Katherine was sitting in the far end of the room. I stood at the door.

"How have you been?" I said slowly.

"Splendid; just fine." She threw her head back. "Very well."

And silence. I looked at the fire.

"Who brought you the wood?"

She laughed, a little, short, bitter laugh.

"Who do you think would be so kind to me? Only one person, one dear friend, *our* favorite friend—Mrs. N. Oh, I had quite a charming chat with her. You see, I am reformed; I remembered all the nice things you told me one day. 'The poor woman'—and everything else you said really sounded affectionate; so partly for your sake I talked to her for a long time, and I can assure you that it is for the last time!"

We both smiled; something was released.

"Katherine, you are wonderful! Will you forgive me?"

"Forgive you? *My* guilt before you is much greater. Did I not tell you I was wicked? I complained about you to Mrs. P. who always comes in to hear or to say something disagreeable. That must be her vocation. I wanted to dull my pain by hurting you some way. I said to her I was cold because you left me without the wood; I did. Now will you forgive me?"

She looked distressed. I did not answer. It really hurt me for the moment. "Oh, don't you know how much I love you? This was the most terrible day I've spent in the Institute, and just because I didn't have your companionship."

"Let us forget it then. Let's not mention it again," I said sincerely. "It was a bad day for both of us."

She opened the drawer of her dresser and took out three scarves with oriental patterns. "Choose the one you like best; I want you to have one—please!"

All three were beautiful.

"You choose it for me. Which one do you think will be the best for me?"

She took a black one with a dark orange pattern around the edges and gave it to me. I have it still.

In spite of all the things I lost travelling on this globe, of all the things that were destroyed in the fire at Taliesin, this little black silk scarf stayed with me. It sealed a strange, unhappy day in my memory, the very day I tried to forget.

As the years of my life still go on that day comes back to me, more and more significant, even beautiful.

New people were constantly coming to the Institute, mostly English people who had attended Ouspensky's lectures in London, and Americans who through various sources had heard of the work. The few old students were their instructors in exercises. In the large living room of the Prieuré (the name of the old estate) we worked in the exercises

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almost every evening. Some evenings were spent in building the study-house; we were all anxious to finish it soon.

Katherine loved to watch the exercises. She sat in a comfortable chair near the big fireplace. She always dressed beautifully, simply, with some little touch of color. She used just enough rouge and lipstick to give glowing brightness to her face. Her hair neatly outlined her head. She lately combed the bang straight back from her forehead. I often sat by her and we would watch together. She understood the beauty of symbolic movement. She watched so eagerly, she seemed mentally to do the movement together with the rest. There was one "group", "The Initiation of the Priestess", to which she reacted with much emotion.

"If only I could have just a little place in that group, if I could sit in front of Mrs. O. with my arms crossed on my breast. I would listen to the beautiful music, I would feel Mrs. O's marvellous arms raised above me in prayer. How grateful I could be for it.

"The music here is an entirely new experience to me. I used to have an overpowering hunger for reading, but not for music. Here I never have enough of it. I want to listen forever. At the present time music to me is one of the swiftest carriers into the Beyond; it makes me fearless of all fears."

It was the last day of December. I came into her room. She was sitting at the table.

"How is everything this morning?" I asked gaily.

"I feel marvellous."

"Did you know that you have been here more than two months already?"

"Two months? Two thousand years you mean! You and I are thousands of years old."

She drew something with her pencil.

"Olgivanna, will you tell me the truth? Do you still believe I am on the right way?"

"I certainly do."

"But what if I tell you that I am back again with all my old feelings, habits and desires, all those which only a month or two ago I pushed away as worthless? What if even the very clothes which one dear to me is wearing—are precious to my eyes and touch? What then? Would you still believe I am on the right way?"

"Yes, you are on the right way. Yours are not 'old feelings, habits and desires'; they are all new, the same in expression, but born of a different quality. We spoke of it two months ago. You did not believe in anything you possessed. The world in which you lived before, you said, was false; you destroyed it. You went on with much courage to build a new one. You did it. Why should you doubt it now?"

"It is wonderful to hear you say that." She was somewhat excited. "You know, I was a little ashamed to speak to you this way. I am so glad now, I am going to write today to my husband. I want him to come here."

"How nice; and we shall all have a chance to meet him."

"I have another great desire: I want to write a book. This is after a long period of passivity; I am going to write a wonderful book. I must soon get well enough to start to work on it. I cannot tell you how eager I am to write again."

"And I to read it. I might read it to you aloud—you will hear your own voice speaking."

Somebody was calling me in the corridor. I turned to go.

"Just a minute," said Katherine. "Do you think it will seem very foolish if I comb my bangs down again?"

"Certainly not. I think it is charming and very becoming to you."

The next day John Middleton Murry came. I met them in the study-house in the afternoon. We had tea together. We felt a little uneasy. Later in the evening Katherine and I sat down on some rugs in the study-house —it was almost finished. They were painting the windows. The sun was low and the dim light was reflected through the rich green, red, blue, yellow pattern of the window glass.

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"Olgivanna, look who is standing shoulder to shoulder with Mr. Murry. They are painting the same pattern on the glass. Life is glorified in its precious nonsenses."

There she was—our Mrs. N! For the last time she came to mark a tiny dot (to some purpose, perhaps) in the pattern of life that Katherine was to finish weaving a few hours later. We looked, and talked very little. Middleton Murry had taken the brush to please Katherine. It pleased her that he was nice and friendly to everyone. The rain sounded on the roof. I wanted to go and bring an umbrella, since it was about time to go to supper, but Katherine stopped me. "Oh, no, I love the rain tonight, I want the feeling of it on my face."

The bell rang. "Until later," smiled Katherine to me, and slowly walked out with her husband. Everyone was gone. I stayed where I was. And suddenly, for no reason whatsoever, the tears began to flow down my face. I could not understand just what I was crying about. Nothing happened, nothing at all! But the sadness of life, a presentiment, seemed to have pressed down on me and would not let go of me.

I got up and walked in the rain and the dark towards the house. After supper we were called into the living-room to do the exercises. There sat Katherine in her favorite place by the fire. I sat down by her as usual.

"I want music," she said. "Why don't they begin? It is quite late; they should begin. Are they not all here?"

She seemed strange, paler than usual, unfamiliar to me.

"I simply must see the 'group' to-night. Will they do the 'group'?"

"I hope they will. Have you seen Mr. Hartman?" I asked.

She did not answer. She looked, it seemed to me, above the heads of the people in the room, but I could not see just where her eyes were directed. She was dreadfully far away from me. Could she be angry, I wondered. But for what? No, it could not be; she simply did not hear me.

"Did you see Mr. Hartman?" I repeated.

"I wish they would begin. I want the music. They simply must do the 'group'. When will they begin?"

This was her answer, and her eyes again looked somewhere above the heads of the people in a direction I could not follow. Neither could I find Katherine. I was alone. We were called and started the exercises. It took great effort to move my body. Katherine's eyes met mine once, but I knew she did not see me. They went straight through and I had a desire to look back and find where they did go.

We began the "group." Katherine's face was pale, but the familiar beloved music did not seem to bring her eyes back. To me that sound was relief. The movement of the prayer became the essence of all that is significant and beautiful. I myself must have been far away, for it took me a few moments to realize that we were stopped abruptly in the middle of it. "We are going back to the study-house," I heard someone say.

Katherine stood up, ready to go to her room.

"Good night, Katherine," I said.

"Good night, Olgivanna." She smiled a pale, indistinct smile. We parted.

I went straight into the study-house, and with the brush in my hand had made just one slow motion on the pattern of the window-glass, when I heard the voice of Mr. Orage: "Please come quickly; Katherine is bad, very bad."

I ran all the way to her room. She was lying down on her bed, with several doctors bent over her. They were going through some hopeless motions with hot water bags. She was dead. I touched her hand, still warm.

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TWO POEMS

by Frances M. Frost

FOG

Where black woods were, there are no woods,
Nor any field where once was damp
And rusty grass. No casual hoofs
Plunge down and stamp
The slope to a sandy cattle-trail.
All known things fail

The silent hour, and fog remains.
Caught in the wet and heavy cloud,
He walks to move his stricken heart,
He sings aloud
Against the loneliness of white
Thicker than night.

Lost on a lost and muffled earth,
He stands and gulps the whiteness in,
Drawing impermanence down a throat
Where song has been,
Finding this dreaded, last defeat
Chilly and sweet.

FRAGMENT OF AN UNRETURNING YEAR

By the brown fields, long-harvested and barren,
Goldenrod withered, and stripped trees creaking in the wind,
By the low gray sky overhead, and deserted pastures,
And the hill brook crying suddenly out of thinned
Thickets, and the pools edged with morning glitter—
By these things I shall know a dark year ended,
And this brief gauntness before the first snowfall
As a fragment to be hoarded, locked in the breast, defended,
Against north-beating wings and a March crow-call.

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FRENCH AUTHORS TAKE REVENGE

by C. E. Andrews

THE immorality of the French is an ancient legend that never dies. We never want it to die, for we secretly like to think that there is some place in the world where all of the Ten Commandments are not taken too seriously. The movies always make Paris the setting for the most alluring temptations. French girls are delightfully dangerous creatures given to dancing and strong drinks. They descend long staircases clad, for the most part, in incredible plumy head-dresses, and captivate firm-jawed, but weak-hearted young gentlemen who forget all they have learned in Sunday school. In the end, of course, the nobler natures of the young gentlemen assert themselves and lead them back to the path of true love and holy matrimony. But for a moment we are terribly worried about their careers. Paris is a dangerous place. Every year we go over by the hundred thousand to see just how really bad it is. And this desire to study wickedness first hand sends us rolling through the purlieus of pleasure in vast auto-buses and leads us to bask fearfully under the glamorous lights of sin in a land where the constitution has no amendments.

This wholesale invasion of Paris, which has turned some quarters of the town into American suburbs, has made the French extremely conscious of America. They have suddenly become curious to know what the country and the home life of these strange invaders are like. They are eager to read the reports of discoverers who have crossed the Atlantic, and to examine their theories about our government, our digestions, and our folk-ways. And by way of exchange of compliments, recent French novelists, dramatists, scenario-writers and newspaper men have begun to develop a very striking and not altogether flattering American legend.

In the French novels and stories of the last two years, the American girl is always a coldly sensual "vamp" whose violent methods of getting her man can hardly be called anything so mild as seduction. When she lives in Europe she rises at five P.M., breakfasts on asparagus and Manhattan cocktails, and makes whoopee until bright dawn warns her that she must hurry home to escape the danger of sun stroke. In Marcel Prévost's latest novel, *I Am Your Master*, a very rich young *américaine* comes to France to pick out a title, seeks it in the society of the Bœuf-sur-le-Toit, and quite deliberately makes a few bedtime experiments before deciding which one to marry and carry home. The deserted French mistress of the titled commodity is left a shattered wreck of tears and neurasthenia.

In Luc Durtain's two volumes of American tales, *Fortieth Story* and *Beyond Hollywood*, American hypocrisy in whatever pertains to sex is the chief theme. The strict taboos in conversation are in vivid contrast to the license in behavior. American women wear decolleté in the day time, take every

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advantage of display which recent fashions gave them, make up for out-of-doors as though they were on the stage, act like demi-mondaines, always take the initiative in love, experiment in sex from an early age, choose whom they will for husbands, divorce them when they become bored and then choose others. These bold females make open proposals to slowly aroused males, either in marriage or in love. In one story, laid in San Francisco, a boy, after a perfectly proper comradeship of some time, goes to call on a girl of his acquaintance. She appears with a suitcase, gives the taxi-driver the address of a hotel, registers for them as man and wife, and undresses immediately on arriving. The boy has an attack of conscience and buys an engagement ring. The next day the girl returns the ring with a brief note, disappears, and the incident is closed. He is only a passing whim. In another story, this time laid in Seattle, three men acquaintances are taken home casually by a middle-aged business man, who introduces them to his wife. They mix a punch out of all the violent alcohols in the cellar. The men take off coats and shoes and dance in a wild orgy with the wife, to the combined music of the radio and phonograph, while the husband looks on in drunken complacency. When his animal jealousy is finally aroused he starts a fight and drives them out of the house.

One of the most curious pictures of American life is Ferri-Pisani's *Lucile, an American Girl*. If this book were only rhymed it would be funnier than any Gilbert and Sullivan opera. The heroine is the daughter of the *roi des packers*, who is the richest man in the world, and lives in a marble palace on Fifth Avenue. She is an amazing creation. Incredibly haughty, scornful of the whole earth, cruel, savage, lascivious, and hyper-neurotic. Although she grants her lover almost every liberty, she holds to a literal virginity and takes pride in believing that she is a "good girl". She treats her lover, a poor innocent French duke in disguise, as the female spider treats her unfortunate mate. She ends in a lunatic asylum. Her father lives on rare beef and whisky but gives out to the world that his only food and drink is milk. He is parsimonious, heartless, insulting to inferiors, capable of the most atrocious cruelty. And he has an erotic fetishism of the strangest variety known to Krafft-Ebing. He is fortunately murdered in the end. The French duke flirts with a little school-teacher who leads him on with tantalizing familiarity. She also remains *"vierge, sinon chaste"*. She gets her lover a job, rents a flat, furnishes it on credit, procures a marriage license, and then tries to drag him to the altar. But he prefers the neurotic millionairess. At the end of this amazing study of American life, Jack the Ripper, who has escaped from an asylum and murdered thirteen people, including the great millionaire, is drowned in the Hudson river by the police, at the express command of the district attorney and the mayor of New York!

Paul Morand, who holds as high a place as any living writer of fiction in France, has written a best-seller on an American theme. *Champions of the World* is the most widely advertised book in France today. It will probably soon reach a sale of two hundred thousand copies. It is a serious study of four American men and four women, whose story gives a wide view of American life in many aspects. The effect is the most unflattering and unsympathetic picture possible. The rule of the dominating female who thwarts or ruins the life of the man to whom she is related as mother, wife, or mistress, is one of the recurrent themes. The men are controlled by these women of strong wills but narrow minds, and all the men, in the end, are failures at forty. They are hard, hurried, unpleasant people, troubled by puritan consciences but guilty of hypocrisy and lack of understanding. One girl, a Jewess from East Side New York, deserted by her husband, finally becomes a Spanish duchess, a Soviet spy, and mistress to an American diplomat.

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Another of the "heroines" of the book, in an excited scene with her Knickerbocker lover, exclaims, "If my lover should die I should telephone the police to take away the body, and I should go out and dance! I am not afraid of microbes or of death. I am a savage woman ready to pass from one chief to another. Nobody can scare me. I am too bad for that! I know what you think of me. I am low. I am dull. I have bad manners". To illustrate this point she picks up the tray full of bottles and liqueur glasses and hurls it across the room against the chimney piece, calling her aristocratic friend a "bastard and son of a bastard". She then bursts into tears and says she does "so want to be happy—happy!"

Naturally, the graphic newspapers and the magazines devoted to crime find America a rich mine of material. Chicago gang-warfare and sporadic race-wars and lynchings are subjects for articles continued from week to week, illustrated with the most frightful photographs. America appears in these journals only as the home of Leopold and Loeb, of hammer murderesses and of blood-thirsty mobs, the land which poisons presidents and burns prisoners alive. Of course, we can hardly protest against this kind of reporting, because we have the same unfortunate journalism at home. But the French public which reads these magazines has no means of knowing any other side of America but its crimes and horrors. For the novelists have depicted us as only one degree less brutal and crude in our manners than the tabloid writers have reported us.

The French have taken their revenge for the absurd caricature which passes for a Frenchman on our stage or screen. Americans in recent French plays are either drunk, or in a constant state of dull boredom, unable to find any amusement in Paris. When they eat, they take ice cream before the fish and pour Worcestershire sauce over raspberries. Even Adolphe Menjou's first French "talkie" was a good-humored satire on an American's attempt to do business in his own way in France, with his final conversion to the French point of view.

We cannot object that the scenes and characters of Marcel Prévost, Luc Durtain, Paul Morand and others cannot be found somewhere in American life between Paris and San Francisco. But the total unfavorable impression which these writers convey seems to be definitely expressive of a change in attitude toward us. Thirty years ago, Pierre de Coulevain wrote *American Nobility*, a novel in which French and American manners were contrasted, the kind of international story which Henry James did with such great skill. De Coulevain's book was a very subtle study of an American girl in aristocratic French society. It showed a fine sense of national differences, and presented both sides with an even-handed justice which James might have envied. The tone and the attitude toward American character was quite the opposite to that of these modern French writers. In them you find no such remark as this comment of De Coulevain, "With us, purity is considered a virtue; in America it is simply a matter of good education".

The difference between the American girl as presented by a French writer in 1898 and in the French fiction of 1928-30 may, of course, indicate that our manners have changed. We are being constantly reminded of this fact by writers at home. But the most marked contrast is in the tone. The novelists today do not seem to wish to find much that is admirable in our character. They are forming a new legend about us and prefer to believe that. There are, of course, political and economic reasons—the treaty, the debt, prohibition and the tariff; there are causes for resentment in all of these. But a more important reason may be found in the overwhelming American invasion of French industries and in the fear of "Americanization" of French life. Since the war, France has changed almost as much as America, and the change has been in the direction of mass

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production, mechanization of life, restriction of individuality, and a development of advertising propaganda. All of these things are the "American invasion", the work of the rather exuberant and self-satisfied people who throng Montparnasse in the summertime and seek a release from their excessively overstandardized existences at home.

The danger of this Americanization is evident on all hands. American automobiles are crowding in, American agricultural machinery has invaded the provinces and the colonies, American safety-razors and American soap can be bought in the remotest French villages; worst of all, the American rules for bridge are destroying the traditions of French whist. America is blamed for the devastating cocktail habit that has taken possession of Paris, and for the recent bold robberies and hold-ups *à la Chicago*. The French public has seen so much hard drinking and hard shooting in the American movies that appear on every screen that it is in danger of being diverted from its own quiet *apéritifs* and from the gentle traditions of Continental crime. The French are quite distinctly worried about all of these things. Soon the great American principle of the sacredness of business above life itself may sweep over the land, and the pleasing custom of spending two hours for lunch in the bosom of one's family will be something for antiquarians to write chapters about. These are the reasons that the French have become extremely curious about the United States, and that their curiosity is strongly tinged with apprehension or dislike.

In response to this interest, a large number of books about America have recently appeared, some serious studies, others hasty travel sketches. And, besides the books, there have been serial letters in the newspapers, and innumerable reviews, taking both sides of the question. Some of these recent discoverers have found much to praise in American civilization; some have even shown extravagant enthusiasm. But it is significant that the two books which are most sharply critical are the two best sellers of the season, Morand's *Champions of the World*, already mentioned, and George Duhamel's *Scenes from the Life of the Future*. These are the books which fit the newly formed popular legend about America. And, unfortunately for us, these two books are the most striking from the point of view of style. They say boldly and brilliantly what the French are ready to believe about us. George Duhamel's hasty and violent denunciation is really amusing reading. It is the cry of the individualist against a world which his rigidly standardizing every phase of life—health, amusement, exercise, dress, food, art, personal habits. And he feels that our passion for mechanism will invent not only a machine for picking strawberries but also for choosing them, tasting them, digesting them! He takes exactly the same point of view that our own critics take toward the movies, the automobile, modern publicity, football, prohibition, or the stock market. He finds in the American scene a vision of what the whole world is coming to, and utters his wail of despair. The wail is a little shrill. It is not so much an attack on American civilization as a violent protest of an individualist against the tendencies of the whole modern world. Incidentally, one cannot help pointing out that, in spite of his horror of the Chicago stockyards, he eats meat; and in spite of his fury against automobiles, he drives one himself and it is of an American make!

Of these books of impressions, the most interesting for an American to read is Paul Morand's *New York*, which has recently appeared in translation. This is not written in the same vein as his novel. He sees much to admire, and has discovered the beauty and thrill of Broadway as only a foreign observer can see it. It appeals to his love of the exotic; he writes of it as though he were in Timbuctoo. He is both delighted and afraid. All through the book he seems afraid of losing his sense of self; his own individuality is op-

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pressed by the tremendous scale of things, the vastness of the avenues, the tremendous height of skyscrapers, the hugeness of bridges and docks, and the amazing crowds such as one sees nowhere else but in Asia. The rush and whirl of life he describes without loving it. He is often puzzled and sometimes superior. He is another individualist who fears the loss of self, the representative of the old world which is built on a more human scale. But he enjoys the romance of the foreign quarters of New York. He describes their color and charm just as he has shown the glamour of other strange places he has written of in his journeyings round the world in search of the bizarre. The romance of the speakeasy amuses him. He delights in the splendor of Fifth Avenue shops, their luxury and fine taste. He likes the social activity of New York, the hospitality, the love of dining out, the elegance of dress. But he also has a horror of the movies. His description of Roxy's is in his most amusing vein: "A nightmare light falls from imitation alabaster bowls and yellow glass lanterns and ritualistic chandeliers; the organ-pipes lighted from below by a greenish glare, make one think of a submerged cathedral, and in the walls are niches intended for cursed bishops. I find a deep, soft arm chair to sink into, and for two hours I watch giant kisses on mouths like the crevasses of the Grand Cañon—embraces of Titans, a complete propaganda of flesh which, without satisfying them, excites these violent American natures. It is worse than a black mass, it is a profanation of everything: of music, of art, of love, of color. I could say that I have had a complete vision of the end of the world". The fierce unrest of New York life is the theme to which Paul Morand reverts most frequently. He sees in everyone's face the signs of keen, excited struggle and activity. A cat was the only calm being he saw on Broadway. The tone of his descriptions always suggest fear rather than love.

The most favorable impression of America comes from the journalist Paul Achard. He was thrilled by everything he saw. He was delighted by the scale of things and by the efficiency which he found in every phase of life. Skyscrapers were exotically beautiful, railway trains were ideals of comfort and speed, the movies were soon to be the most useful and the most perfect art in the world. At the end, he says that America is the one country from which France can learn anything, and that the voyage to America is, for a young European, the only one worth taking. Another book full of appreciation is Yvon Lapaquellerie's *New York in its Seven Colors*. He writes charmingly of the beauty of the city and has a great admiration for the best traits in American life. The thesis of the book is that the true meaning of the three words painted on every public building in France—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity—is to be found only in the United States. Monsieur Lapaquellerie puts together a great number of observed facts and incidents which show that we really have these ancient national principles which the French republic knows only as words. This conclusion is especially interesting since our own critics are disposed to be very doubtful whether we possess this trinity of virtues.

The most unusual book of all that have appeared on the American theme is H. Dubreuil's *Standards; American Labor Viewed by a French Workman*. This is detailed account of the experiences and observations of a highly intelligent French metal-worker during several years in many shops and factories in the United States. He has a few frank criticisms of our shortcomings, but in almost every respect he praises our organization, our methods, our attitude in industrial life. He dislikes our boastfulness, our chauvinism, our total ignorance of Europe and our belief that we have invented everything, and he has no sympathy for our strange habit of chewing either tobacco or gum. But he, like several other recent observers, finds a true democracy in the United

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States. The attitude of the workman toward the foreman or the employer is almost always cordial, and there is no shade of patronage in the relationship of superiors to workmen. Dubreuil reiterates all through his book that it is ability that counts most with us. "We'll see what you can do", was the phrase with which he was always greeted in a new place. And he was never made to feel inferior because he spoke with a foreign accent. From the point of view of a worker, he praises the organization of the Ford type of factory, with every possible application of principles of economy and efficiency. By certain average comparisons he shows that the American workman works fewer hours and minutes for every article of living necessity than the Frenchman does for the same corresponding things. This is a very interesting book.

And there are other books; and still they keep appearing. America seems to be the most interesting literary subject in France today. Perhaps it will be worth while to sum up the chief points on which both pro- and anti-American writers agree.

A most surprising thing is that nearly all of these discoverers find us a polite nation. We are liberal with invitations even to strangers, we are fond of hospitality, we are always giving one another presents. Our workmen go out of their way to be helpful or agreeable to one another. It is almost universal for automobilists to ask pedestrians to ride. But we lose this genuine sense of courtesy when we travel in Europe. We do not behave well there. We become intolerant, impatient, and refuse to appreciate another point of view. We are like bad children. And so it is not fair to judge Americans by the examples who throng European hotels. We are well dressed. There is a degree of smartness found in every class of society, and much less difference in appearance between the classes than in Europe. We have a passion for comfort and for luxury. Our crowds are much more colorful than those of large European cities.

Our food and our drinks and our children are all very bad, just as bad as they can be. Our cookery is pale; we mix the most incongruous foods, and gulp them as though we did not enjoy them. Only a quarter of our people eat as well as the average Parisian taxi-driver. The rest prefer to own automobiles. And as for our drinks under the *régime sec*, they are beyond any power of description! Prohibition is an unreasonable thing, not comprehensible to a Frenchman. It is the result of our Calvinistic passion for conformity, and of our allowing old maids and preachers to dictate our moral standards. Our children are the worst-behaved in the world. They are the only beings in America who are not forced to conform to some kind of behavior. Our large cities have a hard fierce beauty of their own. Modern skyscrapers are unbelievably superb; they are original and distinctive contributions to the great architectural forms of the world. Broadway at night has a grand poetic beauty. To Duhamel, however, it is the poetry of the Inferno. At any rate, skyscrapers, by day or night, are the most impressive things in America.

The amazing use of mechanical contrivances in every phase of life is what distinguishes America most sharply from Europe. These are often ingenious and sometimes have real advantages, but, for the most part, they are looked on with suspicion. They require a deal of care and expense, and, in the end, one is in danger of becoming a slave to the machines. Europe could, perhaps get on with more of this sort of thing, but then, there is the danger that, if once started in this direction, she might in time have those terrible automatic eating-places. The marvellous express elevators in office buildings give the French discoverer his greatest thrill. But he is relieved when he gets back to Paris to see the familiar sign "Elevator not running". He can not bring himself to believe in mechanical efficiency.

In considering our qualities and characteristics as a people, these later observers no

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longer say that our sole interests and admirations have to do with dollars. Several Frenchmen have written that an admiration for power is the most marked American trait. Power is the attribute of a great man, and the attainment of it is the only reason for becoming a millionaire. Energy, not love of wealth, is the chief characteristic of the new race. Our desire for conformity is a characteristic that most foreign visitors do not understand. The European is reluctant to relinquish his individuality before a policeman or a red light, he will not wait his turn in a line, he will not content himself with a choice of five kinds of tinned soups. He feels that a country which produces one hundred varieties of cheese and grows fifty sorts of plums enjoys more freedom of spirit, which is the chief joy of man, than a nation which limits itself to a large scale production of a few types of foods or of useful articles. This willingness to be all alike and the desire to force everybody's taste and everybody's ideas into one mould gives the Frenchman a very poor opinion of us. A people whose standards of judgment and of conduct are those of the crowd is doomed to perpetual inferiority. Our desire for uniformity and our childish acceptance of the absurd lies of wholesale advertising make possible the mass production of ideas or of shaving soap. This is the worst thing about American life.

An extreme love of pleasure is a very conspicuous trait. Our delight in dancing, in the movies, and in the radio is far greater than that of any other people. We live in an atmosphere of nervous speed and worry and our daily life is extremely monotonous. We therefore rush for diversion whenever we can. We are not satisfied with conversation; we have none, in fact. We do not understand the joy of repose, we never listen to what the inner spirit sings. We must be actively, noisily amused. But we take our amusement with stolid faces; we do not know how to be lighthearted like the Latins.

The dominance of women in American life is a point on which all observers agree. And even the most strongly pro-American agree that their influence is bad. Our women are extraordinarily good looking. But they are spoiled, headstrong, exigent. They have little modesty, they have no standard of manners but whims. They have more privileges and are better protected than anywhere else in the world, but they have abused the privileges. The independent, fierce, fighting man of business obeys passively the two great forces in America—women and policemen.

This hasty summary represents what the French visitor sees when he comes to look at us. If he believes that the world should progress toward greater organization and if he admires efficiency, he sees many of our characteristics as virtues, which the individualist sees as faults. But the Frenchman, by nature, is an individualist. And the great body of readers of these books of discovery will feel that America is not so nice a place to live in as France, and that the Americanization of Europe is something to be resisted.

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THE DEATH OF THE GARDENER

by L. A. G. Strong

THE unexpected June shower thinned suddenly: its whispering ceased. It hung a minute in the air, a veil of gleaming gossamer, dissolved, and drifted out to sea. Looking carefully about him, Ian McLean came out from under the thorn where he had been sheltering, and swung the empty sack from his shoulders. A bout of rheumatic fever, some years ago, had made him pay heed to showers.

Standing with his legs apart, folding the sack, and drawing a deep breath, he gazed on a transfigured world. The evening had been beautiful before. He was not conscious that anything could be added to it. But now, each arching frond of bracken, each blade of grass, sparkled with points of light. The road glistened, and the boulders above it; the broom revived and glowed. Even the iron posts of the old wire fence across the road shone glossy as jackdaws, while rows of single jewels hung from the underside of every wire. Beyond, the reeds stood up, fresh delicate green above the milk-white sand-hills: the stretch of sea was calm and luminous as silk, and Skye, the enchanted island, rose, picked out with emerald, its jagged, fantastic pinnacles dim as a bloom upon the evening sky.

Ian gazed, rubbed his ginger moustache with a huge, freckled finger, and went on to fetch his goat. His day's work in the garden was over. It had been a heavy day, for next Friday the family were coming to the Big House for their summer holidays, and he wanted to have all in order. Do what he would, it was impossible to start making ready till a bare ten days before they arrived. The Northern spring came late. Next Friday would be the first of July, and the garden was a good six weeks behind their garden in the South. They knew that, of course. They were always very just, very generous, in their dealings. More like friends than employers, ever since he entered their service, thirty-six years ago. It was for this reason, not for his own credit, that Ian wished he could make the garden do impossible things. He could coax more out of it than any man; but the little hill and the row of pines which so effectually sheltered it from the south and west kept off a deal of sun, and the soil was light.

"Meh-eh-eh-eheheh!"

Martha saw him coming. She was straining on her tether, stretching out her thin neck, and bleating welcome. He had put her a hundred yards up the slope, where the grass grew strong and sweet. Ian looked up at her, but did not speak until he had climbed a good third of the way. Then, to tease her, he called in a soft, enticing voice, "Mar-tha! Eh, girl! Mar-tha!" and chuckled to see her impatient efforts to get free.

Soon, leisurely, he had reached her, and stooped to untie the picket. She leaned against him, shoving her head into the hollow between his chest and his thigh as he

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bent down, almost pushing him over. He had to put out a hand and catch her across the nose, to hold her off.

"Easy, easy, now! There, girl! There!"

He stood up, breathing hard, and coiled the picket rope, leaving a yard loose to lead her home. From the height, he took a fresh look round. It was a marvellous evening, clear, soft, and shining. Unconsciously, he was guessing tomorrow's weather: such divination being instinctive, a part of his reaction to the scene. Apparently the inspection satisfied him, for he gave a deep sigh of content, and started downhill. Martha, who had been looking up at him with her mild lozenge eyes, turned suddenly frolicsome. She skipped from tuft to tuft, gazing mischievously down at the ground, and forcing him hurriedly to pay her out more rope, lest she pull him over.

"Easy, easy, girl! What's come to you, indeed! You'll turn the milk for our supper. Easy! Do you hear me, now!"

The goat stopped, and looked up at him, her long face full of irreverence. He laughed, and made as if to give her a clout with his left hand. She bucked, put down her head, turned her back, and reared up on her hind legs. Well contented, he led her down to the road, shaking her rope and chiding her affectionately.

Once upon the level, Martha became demure, and walked along quietly, her hoofs clicking on the rough, uneven surface. Their sound contrasted sharply with Ian's slow stride; and the echoes of both were intensified as soon as they came under the high eastern wall of the garden.

Ian worked in sight of his cottage, and that was a great comfort to him on rainy days, or in the wintertime. All he had to do was to lock the gate in the tall iron railings, cross the gravel drive, and plunge down a smaller, overgrown drive that led to his own back door. A minute from leaving work, he could be sitting in front of the kitchen fire, and exchanging the news of the past three hours with his wife. It was easy work, in the short winter days, when the sun set at four, and a chill rose from the little overgrown drive, a chill he loved, for it meant home and the fireside. Ian had come to a time of life when he liked easy work. His spirit was willing; he worked hard when hard work was needed; but he was frankly glad when it was not needed. He was sixty-two, though no one would guess it, and at sixty-two the lust for hard work out of doors has passed.

Ian swung open the main gate of the drive—Martha, at the last moment, pretending to object—and the footsteps of man and beast were blurred on the grass of the little drive. Arrived at his cottage, he called twice to his wife. There was no answer; so he unhooked a large blue jug from inside the door, turned an empty box on its side, and milked the goat himself. A pint, morning and evening, was Martha's yield: plenty for the two of them.

"Still! Keep still. Wait you now. There's my girl."

He had barely finished when his wife came down the drive. She had been up all day getting things ready at the Big House, and had waited for the shower. She was a short, dumpy woman, some ten years Ian's junior, with soft, kindly eyes, and a mouth which could show unexpected resolution. Her general air was mildly deprecating, but when the mouth hardened, as it did upon all points of principle, Mrs. Ian was more immovable than a dozen Marthas. For the big, easy-going, gentle man she had been an ideal mate. To give in to her was little hardship, and, judged by results, she gave wise counsel. Between them, in the Family's absence they took care of house and estate: and no lodge in the Western Highlands had better caretakers.

They had little to say to one another, as they sat down presently to supper. Mrs. Ian told in her habitual plaintive monotone what rooms she had cleaned out, how there were two tiles off the wash-house roof, how a small

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packet of table knives had been mislaid, and what was still to do. Ian, between mouthfuls, told her of his work in the garden, a few words at a time.

"There is a third young robin now . . . comes and sits beside me . . . while I am at the beds. When I sat down . . . the biggest one flew over and perched on my knee. Not afraid, not afraid at all."

"Well, really, now. The artful thing."

"The strawberries . . . I have them well netted. A few of them are too far on, I am afraid. But most of them will be well for Friday."

"Mrs. MacCallum told me she had it in a letter from Mrs. Young that Miss Monica was no looking at all well this summer."

"Och, now."

"Yes. A trouble of some kind, Mrs. Young is of the opinion."

"Well! The poor young lady!"

Mrs. Ian gave him a glance in which there was a spark of exasperation. He went on with his meal, tiresomely incurious, giving her no opportunity to open up the surmises which were teeming in her mind.

The meal over, they sat for a while in silence, and Ian read the paper. He read it always in the same way, sitting with his knees wide apart, holding it open at right angles, high up: never folding back a page, nor even sloping it, to get the light. Little light came in, even from the brilliant westering sun, for the window was all overgrown with fuchsia; and the bees, still lazily occupied among the blossoms, kept up a sleepy bourdon, as if in the peace of the evening they had forgotten why they came.

For half an hour, maybe, Ian read on: becoming conscious, towards its end, that his wife was beginning to stir meaningly. Not till she said "Now, Ian", did he fold the paper, put it by, and go over to the little table in the corner. From it he lifted a large Bible, and a small book of devotions (presented to Mrs. Ian by the Family), and brought them to the kitchen table. He carried the Bible with his huge hands pressed open against its sides, and set it down carefully upon the table, as if it were very heavy, and made of glass. The devotion book, which was small and light, rode on top.

Leaning forward, and scrutinizing the cover of the Bible, Ian blew at it, causing his wife to look up sharply. But she said nothing; and, as Ian opened the Bible, and found the place, she folded her hands upon her lap, and drew down her lips into an appropriate expression of severity.

"Let us read the Word of the Lord, in the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy."

Adjusting his spectacles, Ian read, with a kind of hushed earnestness, giving out every detail of every verse with equal emphasis. It was all alike to them both, the Word of the Lord, comprehensible or incomprehensible, of sovereign merit and power, the message and the discipline of salvation. Every night, save Sunday, the two held their short service together: and if Mrs. Ian accentuated the discipline, and kept him up to the mark, Ian was more than ready to comply. He was not always in a hurry to begin: he loved his pipe and his paper: but, once those were laid aside, he worshipped with the full devotion of his soul.

Slowly, carefully, and earnestly, following the text with his forefinger, he read the Word.

"There is none like to the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. . . ."

Monotonously his voice went on, and the bees still buzzed drowsily outside the window, and the kettle murmured on the range to make their good-night cup of tea. Then, the reading over, Ian shut the Bible, and took up the devotion book. For an instant, they looked at one another: then they turned back to back, pushed their chairs forward, kneeled, and prayed. A note

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of strain came into Ian's voice, for it was hard to kneel and read from the little book. The print was small: he was obliged to twist sideways, to catch what was left of the light. And so, having commended to Almighty God the Family, their daughter away in Glasgow, their son afloat, and themselves, they rose: Ian put away the books and Mrs. Ian busied herself with the tea.

"I don't think I'll take a cup the night. I'm hot. I'll just take a cup of cold water from the tap."

His wife straightened up.

"No take a cup of tea? Why will ye not, I'd like to know? What's better for ye?"

"Och, I'm a a bit hot, yet."

"Take your tea, now. Cold water is no a healthy thing to drink before your bed."

"No. I have a fancy for the water."

Mrs. Ian gave a grunt, and went on making the tea. A minute passed before she spoke again.

"Many persons have given themselves an internal chill, swallowing down pints of cold water when they were hot from their work. Do you no mind Andrew McPhail below—"

"Och, I'm no going to swallow down pints. I'm only going to take a half cupful. And I'm no perspiring. I'm just dry."

He spoke good-humoredly, but she made no more attempt to overrule him. She came to the table, and sat sipping her tea. His big boots scraped on the flags outside, and, listening sharply to gauge the amount, she had to admit that it could be only a half cupful.

He returned, hung up the cup, and wiped his moustache with the back of his hand. She looked sideways at him.

"Will you no try a drop now, to take the chill out of the water?"

"Thank you, no. I'm well as I am."

They sat up for a few minutes more; then Ian rose, to fasten up for the night. As he stood up, he stiffened slightly, and a momentary look of incredulity passed across his face. A strange, uneasy tremor, quick, slight, but disturbing, made him wonder for an instant if the cold water, after all, had gone astray. He blew, and squared his shoulders. The feeling had vanished. He could not even be sure he had felt anything: and he went into the tiny porch with a smile.

The pine-wood stair was narrow and winding: it had no window. Ian held up the candle for his wife to go first, and open the door. Then he blew it out, cupping his hand carefully behind it, lest a drop of grease fall. The bedroom was full of light from the west.

"I am well on with the work," Ian was saying presently, as he pulled off his heavy woollen socks. "I have the worst of it over me now. There's no much to be done, till they come."

"That's a good thing. I don't fancy you to be working so hard, in the hot weather."

Ian looked straight in front of him. He knew well enough that if there was the least sign of the work being behindhand, she would press him without concern. Her loyalty to the Family was paramount. Sooner than have the smallest thing undone in preparation for their coming, she would have let her own kitchen go untended.

They got down together into the queer, small, square double bed which they both stubbornly preferred to the bigger one provided by the Family, and were soon asleep.

Two hours later, Ian fell into a dream. He was walking to church in company, on a hot day, under oppressive, copper skies. As he walked, the heat and inconvenience were aggravated by the fact that his stomach was growing insupportably heavy. For some reason, he was much ashamed of this condition, and labored to conceal it from his companions. His difficulty became pain, and he began to blow so loudly that he almost woke himself from the dream. This is a dream, he said reassuringly to himself, this is just a dream; and, secure in this knowledge, he was allowing the dream to continue, when, without warning, he was hit

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a terrific blow in the stomach, which doubled him up gasping on his bed. The force of the blow was simply unbelievable, and it was followed by a thunderstorm of pain so blinding, so violent, that for a few seconds he had no idea of anything. Then the pain eased, and he lay, clutching the bedclothes, his heart thumping madly, the sweat pouring from his body. His wife, half roused, was stirring and murmuring resentfully. Ian's mind became suddenly alert. At all costs, he must not rouse her. That drop of cold water—he would never hear the end of it. He must hold on, as best he could, till the pain passed. Then, perhaps—

A second blow crashed into the very middle of him, and his whole body was swept by a storm of agony. It came leaping on him, in great gusts, without mercy. He knew nothing but the pain. A great steel gripe swooped down, as if from a crane, plunging its curved prongs deep into his bowels: the prongs closed like a fist, and it was picked up, eviscerating him, tearing him with agony. He saw his wife's face, drawn with fright, her eyes dark and staring in the candlelight. For a long time he could not realize her questions, much less answer them. Then the candle left the room. He rolled over on his side, convulsed, his knees rigid, biting at the hot tumbled bedclothes.

Ages passed. Ian's self, his consciousness, lost all sense of place. He suffered agonies in a hundred worlds. Great bursting shells of pain: great fiery wheels of white and stabbing blue: great agonized earthquakes, in which the racked earth, the burning mountains, were ground together and tugged into one great knot that strained, choked, and burst asunder. For the few moments when he knew his body, Ian could not believe that there was anything left in it. It felt deadly cold, as if the explosions had blown out all his inwards. In these shivering respites, life came back to his stunned mind, and he began to hope that the fury of the illness was past. But, each time, the attack blazed out again: there were more explosions, more annihilation. . . .

His wife was busy at him, pulling back the clothes, pressing a hot water bottle against his stomach. He opened his eyes. She looked pale and owlish in the early morning light.

"I'm going away down to the Dobies', and ask them to fetch the doctor who is staying above at the farm."

A lifetime of experience asserted itself, and he found that he could speak.

"You must no . . . go . . . till four, when they will be stirring. . . . The hay . . . tired. . . ."

But she was gone. He was alone. The heat of the bottle, spreading through him, eased the pain, and made it manageable. He was suffering greatly, but at least he was a human being, lying on a bed. As his mind, returning to its home, began to lay hold on what had happened, a long sickening root of pain seemed to worm in between him and his heart. It bored so deep, with such cold threat of dissolution, that for the first time the idea came to him that he might not get better. There had never been such a pain before. Yes, said the root at once, writhing and twisting its way still deeper. You will not get better. You are going to die.

Immediately, with the certainty, came a wave of panic. An agonized sweat burst from him: his heart broke into sudden wild commotion: he began to struggle. Then, checked by a savage stab of the pain, he tried to pray. His hot lips babbled, but his mind would not help them. It shied off like a terrified animal from the half-seen spectre. In despair, he gripped it, forced it back, tried to think of a prayer, tried to think of the last prayers he had uttered: and at once, calm and quiet as a sunrise, the remembrance came. He heard again the words he had read a few hours before. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Drenching, cool, and sweet, peace flooded his soul. Those words—they

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had been intended for his comfort. "And underneath. . . ." Then all was well. It was seldom he recalled any particular text, but this sounded in his ears with a voice like a singing bell. Blessed, blessed relief! He smiled, wondering how he could ever have been afraid. Then the pain came back, swinging its terrible hammers, and Ian again ceased to be a human being.

When he was next himself, it was clear morning. A man was bending over him. He recognized Dr. Fraser, the doctor from Edinburgh who was staying at the Dobies' farmhouse. He tried to speak, but at once the room spun hideously round. A hand was on his forehead: there was a noise of someone trying to be sick. Now, he was flat on his back again. Words, meaningless, far off, floated in the air.

". . . acute peritonitis . . . perforated appendix . . . his heart . . ."

As if it saw its enemy, the pain raged and stormed. Life, the world since it began, was nothing but wheel on wheel of flame. Great coughing volcanoes shot up flame from its center: flails of fire drove it spinning through space. Fingers, icy cold, pulled up someone's sleeve: someone's arm felt a prick: the storms went off a little, turned into recognizable, separate thunder, sank to a throbbing rumble.

Ian had little more terrestrial consciousness. The morphia, withheld as long as there was hope, was given freely, once the heart weakened, to ease his end. He passed into a dim, slow day-dream, still in pain, but pain a long way off. Only once, past midday, did it prowl back, knocking with jagged hammers at his exhausted ribs: but before it shattered him he felt the welcome prick on his arm. With a great effort, he opened his eyes. Doctor Fraser smiled down into them.

"That better?"

Ian's eyes rolled shut, and he nodded faintly. Then he remembered something—his one worry, his one sense of guilt, which had been trailing him through many a nightmare. As his lips labored to articulate it, the doctor bent close.

"It was no . . . the half cup of cold water . . .?"

"Bless you, no. Nothing at all to do with it. It would have been all the same, if you'd drunk none, or half a gallon."

Good. Good. That was well. He had not brought on all this by wilful obstinacy, by gainsaying Ellen.

"Tell . . . my wife . . ."

"I've told her. She knows. Here . . . Mrs. McLean?"

"Och, indeed, yes. I know. Yes, indeed, indeed, Ian dear. Och, yes."

Och yes. Och yes. Indeed. His mind floated away. . . .

He was in his garden. He saw it all very clearly: passively to begin with, then with awakening interest. The largest robin was sitting on the stone base of the iron railings. A corner of the netting had come loose above the strawberries. That must be seen to at once. He must go back and tell . . . go back and tell . . . tell . . .

A delicious vision rose before him, of gulls upon a rock. The sea, alive and gleaming in bright sunshine, was breaking softly over it, white as the gulls. They stood above, beyond the range of the waves. He saw them with amazing distinctness, their eyes, their bills, and the gleaming sides of the rock. With a wrench, he recalled his mind.

"Ellen."

"Yes, dear. Yes. Don't you hear me. I'm here, I'm here."

". . . the strawberries . . . the net . . . corner . . ."

"Yes, yes. Now, don't fret. It is all right."

". . . the net . . ."

"Yes, yes."

Yes. He fell asleep, too much exhausted to continue. Through the window came a thin, plaintive bleating. Martha was anxious to be milked. Mrs. Ian looked round doubtfully several times, but made no move.

"Meh-eh-eh! meh-eh-eh-eh!"

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Ian, though not properly conscious, heard the familiar sound. He stirred uneasily. A colloquy in whispers followed, and in the end Mrs. Ian, tears streaming down her face, got up and went quickly from the room.

The bleating ceased.

Ian smiled. He was up on the hill, where he had tethered Martha the day before. It was a marvellous evening. Gazing upon it, he began to rise in the air. Deliberately, he recalled himself, and felt the shape of the bed beneath his body. A minute, and he was back, well above the hill. It was like lying half asleep on Sunday morning. One could wake—let oneself go; wake—let oneself go. Only, now, the waking became harder, instead of easier.

The sea was luminous and very calm. Magnificent clouds towered in the air. He saw all the Islands, in ever-widening view, Skye, Rum, Eigg, Uist, Canna, Mull, and Coll: all the Western Islands, dark and clear, floating upon the still, wide sea. Suddenly he felt misgivings, to be so high above the ground. Then he remembered. "He rideth upon the heaven to thy help, and in His excellency on the sky." To thy help. To his help, Ian's.

There was nothing to fear. Confidently, thankfully, he abandoned himself. The western sea, the theatre of his life, each bay, each inlet, every rock and field, lay clear and beautiful beneath his feet. A sound arose from it all, without disturbing the vision, and he knew the sound to be his wife weeping. With a part of himself he willed to comfort her; but all he could say was "I am ready to go". He did not even know if he said it, but he willed it aloud, several times: "I am ready to go". The weeping rose louder, but, selfish now for the first time, he could not heed it.

Joy, rising from the sea like music, sang around him. The air was bright: the breeze smelt of the sea. He was up-borne, supported; there was no more pain. With a sigh of uttermost content, he let himself go for the last time, and leaned back upon the everlasting arms.

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THE HUMANISM OF CONFUCIUS AND ARISTOTLE

by Ping-Ho Kuo

This study attempts to bring out some of the important similarities that actually exist in the teachings of Confucius and Aristotle. Such an attempt is made not with a view to emulating the example of the Alexandrian Jews of the early Christian era who are said to have produced innumerable treatises on plagiarism in which they tried to prove that all the best sayings of all the Greek philosophers were "stolen" from the Jews and that Plato was but "Moses Atticus". To argue that Aristotle's *Ethics* was based upon the Confucian Four Books and that Aristotle was but "Confucius Atticus" would be the height of intellectual folly and naïveté. But in these days of historical relativity when, in the comparative study of cultures, only what is different, strange and unique is studied and emphasized, it is both legitimate and desirable to call attention to the universal and permanent element that underlies the various forms of true civilization. And in the case of Confucius and Aristotle the similarity of their ethical teaching is real and not imagined. It is the result of the similarity of their main attitude towards life. They both see life steadily and see it whole. They call a man a man, neither a god nor an animal. To avoid violent oscillation between supernaturalism and naturalism the world would do well to ponder the deep, sane teachings of Confucius and Aristotle. The usual charge brought against their philosophy of life is that it is not inspiring. But to be inspiring is certainly different from being extreme and eccentric. In discussions of this nature, one should, above all things, realize the danger of self-deception and not be ever ready to belittle any view of life which whole ages have found sound and reasonable.

To begin with, both Confucius and Aristotle have the same conception of human nature. The idea of original sin and total depravity is alien to their thought. For if human nature is originally and hopelessly evil then there is an end of all moral endeavor. One cannot add a cubit to one's moral stature even as one cannot add a cubit to one's physical stature. It is predetermined. The only salvation would lie outside oneself, in the operation of a whole series of miracles which to Confucius and Aristotle would have seemed a little unmeaning and improbable. Confucius himself, unlike his great successor Mencius, is not explicit on the question of the goodness and badness of human nature, but the orthodox Confucian tradition always represents human nature as good. In the *Analects*, we find the following very significant remark of the Sage: "By nature, men are nearly alike; by habituation they get to be wide apart".

This passage is incorporated in the third and fourth lines of the *Three Character Classic* (a rhymed primer which in former days every Chinese schoolboy was required to learn by heart). The first two lines

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definitely state that "in the beginning human nature is good".

Now, this orthodox Confucian conception of human nature must not be identified with the Rousseauistic conception. The Rousseauist believes that human nature is *naturally* good. But the Confucianist believes that human nature is not naturally good but *potentially* good. This conception of the potential goodness of man's nature enhances the sense of human dignity and at the same time deepens the sense of human responsibility. Upon this conception is based the Confucian scheme of education, which is mainly an education of character with a view to self-perfection. For the formation of good character, training and habituation are absolutely necessary. As a matter of fact, it depends to a great extent upon discipline and habituation whether a man turns out to be good or bad. This is the meaning of the crisp sentence quoted above, "By nature, men are nearly alike; by habituation they get to be wide apart". It is diametrically opposed to the Rousseauistic heresy that the only habit a child should form is to form no habit. On this question Aristotle is at one with Confucius. "Virtue is not produced in us either by nature or in opposition to nature, we are naturally capable of receiving it and we attain our full development by habituation." As Aristotle himself points out, the Greek word "ēthos", character, is derived from "ĕthos", meaning habit.

But habituation is only a means to an end. The end of habituation is the making of moral choices. Habituation does not lead to determinism; it only makes the act of right choosing more certain but not absolutely certain. In fact, the very idea of habituation presupposes a will that is free to choose. For unless the will is free, habituation itself would be at once a superfluity and an impossibility. Aristotle's opinion on the question of the freedom of the will is just as sane as that of Confucius. "Everything of which the efficient cause lies within ourselves is itself in our power and therefore voluntary." The Confucian conception is that man is placed within the bounds prescribed by heavenly destiny. But within those bounds man is, nevertheless, free. Will is in the power of man, something of which he cannot be deprived. "The commander of the forces of a large state may be carried off, but the will of even a common man cannot be taken from him." "I wish to be virtuous and lo! virtue is at hand."

The question of the freedom of choice leads to the question of the object of choice. To this question, the answer given by both Confucius and Aristotle is found in the doctrine of the Mean. The doctrine of the Mean is the basic doctrine in any genuine humanism. Though it was first given precision and corroboration in the East by Confucius and in the West by Aristotle, neither of them can be said to have originated this doctrine. It was part of the racial wisdom of the ancient Chinese and the ancient Greeks. In the remote antiquity of China the sage Emperor Yao, on resigning his throne to Shun, addressed the latter as follows: "The order of succession which Heaven has bestowed rests now in thy person. Maintain without wavering the Mean". Emperor Shun, in obedience to the injunction of his predecessor, "took hold of the extremes, determined the Mean, and employed it in his government of the people". Kaou-Yao, Minister of Crime to Emperor Shun, counselled Yu, the founder of the Hea Dynasty "to combine affability with dignity; mildness with firmness; bluntness with respectfulness; aptness for government with reverence; docility with boldness; straightforwardness with gentleness; easiness with discrimination; vigor with sincerity; valor with righteousness". Long before Confucius men had already discovered that in government as in other human affairs excess must be avoided. But it is Confucius who first gave prominence to this principle of the Mean and made it the cornerstone of his philosophy. In his

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commentaries on the *Book of Changes*, the word "Mean" appears more than a hundred times and the word "Time", which denotes "Mean" relative to circumstances, appears more than forty times. The very title of one of the Four Books, *Chung-Yung*, is often rendered as *The Doctrine of the Mean*. This classic, generally regarded as the work of Confucius's grandson, contains an adequate exposition of the central doctrine of the Sage. The gist of this doctrine is, however, expressed in a pithy remark found in the *Analects* to the effect that, "To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short".

In ancient Greece, we find "moderate deeds" praised by as early a writer as Hesiod. The Delphic inscription "Nothing too much" was produced in the era of the Seven Sages. The saying, "I wish to be of middle rank in the State", was from Phocylides of the sixth century B.C. The philosophical import of these wise saws was later discussed by the Pythagoreans who distinguished the finite conceived as good from the infinite, in the sense of the unlimited, conceived as bad. This distinction was made use of by Plato and incorporated with his principle of Measure. The Aristotelian principle of the Mean, so conspicuous in the *Ethics*, is really a modification of the Platonic principle of Measure. But it is Aristotle who first gave a systematic and full treatment to this principle and made it famous in the history of thought in the Western world.

The Mean, as understood by both Confucius and Aristotle, is not a mere *medio tutissimus ibis*. It is radically different from the world-wise philosophy of the Preacher, "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" The Mean is itself an extreme. There is no "moderation in moderation". As Aristotle himself says, "When, therefore, we are seeking a logical definition of virtue, we must describe it as a mean. But we must remember that when we look at it from the point of view of what is best and 'well done', it is itself an extreme". The Mean may be likened to a beautiful organism in which nothing is irrelevant, either in excess or in defect. To achieve the Mean is, unquestionably, the most difficult task in life. So says Confucius: "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Mean. Rare have they long been among the people, who could practice it". Again, "men all say, 'We are wise'; but happening to choose the course of the Mean, they are not able to keep it for a round month". And again, "A man may be able to renounce the possession of kingdoms and empire, be able to spurn the honors and emoluments of office, be able to trample upon bare, naked weapons: with all that he shall not be able to attain to the Mean".

The Mean, or "Nothing too much", is not a principle of negation or contraction, as some modernists would have us believe. On the contrary, it is definitely a principle of expansion or, more correctly, a principle of perfection, of working according to excellence. The Mean concerns itself with quality no less than quantity. As J. A. Stewart puts it, it is the "qualitatively suitable quantity". And this cannot be determined by the Mean itself. It must be determined by an objective standard. This objective standard Aristotle calls Reason (λόγος) and Confucius *Tao*.

According to Aristotle, the appetites, passions and desires must be properly regulated according to Reason in order that they may exhibit balance, proportion and harmony. These appetites, passions and desires are in themselves not bad. They may even be made contributory to our total moral welfare though their inordinate assertion is sure to produce disastrous results. "The material", says Aristotle, "from which and the means by which any form of virtue is produced and those by which it is destroyed are the same." The keynote with both Aristotle and Confucius is neither suppression nor indulgence but control and harmonization. The *Tao* of Confucius is not the same as the mystical and cosmic *Tao* of the Taoists. It is the

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normal and humanistic law of order and harmony. "*Tao* is not far from men. When men try to pursue a course, which is far from the common indications of consciousness, this course cannot be called *Tao*." *Tao* is something in which we live and move and have our being. "It may not be abandoned for an instant. If it could be left, it would not be *Tao*." The following passage sums up the philosophy of Confucius admirably:

> While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow or joy the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred and they act in their due measure and degree, there ensues what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and Harmony is the universal path which they all should pursue.

But the Reason of Aristotle and the *Tao* of Confucius are, after all, abstract standards. The human craving for the real and the immediate demands some concrete embodiment of these abstractions, whether this concrete embodiment is to be the ideal type of man or some contemporary or historical personage. The Word must be made flesh. It shows Aristotle's real insight into ethical problems when, in his definition of virtue, after saying "The Mean as it is determined by Reason", he adds "or as the wise man would determine it". In another place, Aristotle says: "It is the good man (ὁ σπουδαῖος) that judges rightly in every case and in every case the truth is what appears to him. He is, as it were, a standard and measure of all things". Confucius loves the concrete even more than Aristotle. Instead of giving, like Aristotle, a scientific analysis of the virtues of the good man, Confucius directs his chief attention to a description of the good man himself who is the embodiment of all those virtues. This good man Confucius calls *Chun Tzu* who represents the ideal man of moral perfection. The literal translation of *Chun Tzu* is "kingly man" and the Aristotelian counterpart is, perhaps, "the highly serious man" (ὁ σπουδαῖος) or "the magnanimous man" (ὁ μεγαλόψυχος), though neither gives us a complete picture of the Aristotelian philosophy of life as *Chun Tzu* does of the Confucian. The following is a good example of the numerous descriptions of the *Chun Tzu*:

> The *Chun Tzu*, while honoring the greatness and power of his moral nature, yet does not neglect inquiry and pursuit of knowledge. While widening the extent of his knowledge, he yet seeks to attain utmost accuracy in the minutest details. While seeking to understand the highest things, yet he lives a plain, ordinary life in accordance with the Mean.

Closely bound up with the idea of the *Chun Tzu* is the idea of imitation. The *Chun Tzu* is the pattern after which we should fashion ourselves. In imitating the *Chun Tzu* we are imitating the ideal man, man as he ought to be, not as he is. The wise Emperors Yao, Shun and others who are so often mentioned by Confucius are the approximations of the *Chun Tzu* which he had been able to find in the past history of China. Their importance lies not so much in the fact that they are historical personages as in the fact that they are the idealizations of Confucius's imagination. Those who insist upon the "historicity" of these ancient worthies completely misunderstand the original intention of the great Master. Human nature is eternally imitative. The important question is not whether we should imitate or not but what examples we should set up for our imitation. "Example", as Burke says, "is the school of mankind; it will learn at no other." It is this idea of imitation which led Confucius to lay so much emphasis on personal example as the most effective means of securing proper social and political relations. "With the right men," he says, "the growth of good government is as rapid as the growth of plants in the right soil." The same opinion is expressed by Aristotle in his *Politics*: "Whenever the chiefs

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of the state deem anything honorable the other citizens are sure to follow their example". The principle of ideal imitation is as much emphasized in his theory of virtue as in his theory of art. It is a matter of common knowledge that in his *Poetics* Aristotle maintains that artists should imitate things not as they are but as they ought to be. And as "virtue is finer than the finest art", it follows that those who practice virtue must perforce imitate the ideal even more assiduously than artists. With Aristotle, however, the ethical ideal remains an ideal, while with Confucius the ideal is definitely and completely personified in the *Chun Tzu*.

The supreme virtue, or rather the sum of all virtues, which Confucius requires the *Chun Tzu* to possess is *Jen*. *Jen* is usually translated as "benevolence" and its meaning has hitherto been but imperfectly understood. The character is composed of two other characters, "two" and "men"; so *Jen* is simply humanness, the virtue of man to man. The best rendering of *Jen* would be "friendship" (φιλία) as understood and interpreted by Aristotle in the eighth and ninth books of his *Ethics*. "*Jen* is the characteristic element of humanity, and attachment to relatives is its highest development." "Filial piety and brotherly love are the basis of *Jen*." The following passage from the *Ethics* reads like a paraphrase of the above two quotations: "Friendship has a natural basis in the feeling of parent for offspring and offspring for parent and in the feeling which members of the race, and especially of the human race, bear to one another".

Jen is not universal love or unselective sympathy; it needs to be graded and differentiated. Confucius would certainly agree with Aristotle when the latter remarks: "Friendships likewise differ in degree. So too do the various principles of Justice involved, not being the same between parents and children as between brothers, nor between companions as between fellow-citizens merely, and so on of all the other conceivable Friendships". The idea of differentiation and propriety is at the bottom of *li* (decorum), another important word in the Confucian Classics, for *li* consists not in "gems and silks" but "proceeds from the degree of relationships and steps of honor due to the worthy, and forms therefore the distinctions of social life". While Confucius wishes decorum to be embodied in social manners and conventions, Aristotle, being more objective and impersonal, wishes it to be embodied in laws and constitutions.

But it is on the notion of self-culture or self-love that Confucius and Aristotle come to perfect agreement and show their most profound understanding of moral subtleties. According to Aristotle a man is his own best friend and the best form of friendship is the love of himself. "The good man", says he, "ought to love himself, for by acting nobly he will both benefit himself and assist others." In *Chia-Yu* (Confucius's Family Discourse) Confucius is reported to have asked his great disciple Yen Yuan what he thought of the man of wisdom and the man who has *Jen*. Yen Yuan replied: "The wise man knows himself, the man who has *Jen* loves himself". Upon which Confucius said: "Such is the *Chun Tzu*".

The "self" which the good man loves is not the irrational self which excludes others but the rational self which includes others. The irrational self is unique and expansive and seeks its own object at the expense of others. The rational self has a relation to what Dr. Johnson would call "the grandeur of generality" and what Matthew Arnold would call "The eternal not ourselves which makes for righteousness". It is common with others and its cultivation does not lead to conflict but to the realization of a fuller and larger life. The harmony which we achieve within ourselves is the source of our friendly feelings towards our fellowmen. In the final analysis, friendship is but another name for self-perfection. There is no real antagonism between the individual and society. Noble

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egoism is altruism. In the *Doctrine of the Mean* we find the following striking sentence: "*Jen* is self-perfection". Without self-perfection *Jen* or friendship in the widest sense is unattainable. *Jen* is not a promiscuous philanthropy. It is something that grows in us and its growth is the result of our sedulous self-cultivation. Yen Yuan inquired as to the meaning of *Jen*. The Master said: "To subdue one's self and return to the law of decorum is *Jen*. . . ." Yen Yuan said: "I beg to ask the steps of that process". The Master replied: "Do not use your eyes, your ears, your power of speech or your faculty of movement without obeying the inner law of self-control".

The man who loves himself best is never selfish. He is even ready to give up his life in order to preserve what is best in him. Confucius says: "The determined scholar and the man who has *Jen* will not seek to live at the expense of injuring their *Jen*. They will even sacrifice their lives to preserve their *Jen*". The same idea is found in the following words of Aristotle: "The good man will throw away money and honors and everything that men commonly strive for, claiming for himself what is noble. . . . This is perhaps what a man does when he dies for others. He chooses something great and noble for himself".

Yet with all their emphasis upon the individual, both Confucius and Aristotle recognize the fact that man is essentially a social and political being. In Confucianism man is considered not as hermit but as son, brother, husband, friend and subject. The proper sphere of man lies in men; it is only through intercourse with our fellow-men that we can hope to achieve our self-perfection. To Confucius or to Aristotle the individual and the state have the same moral purpose. The difference between the good of the individual and the good of the state is one of degree, not of kind. The ideal of the moral teacher should be also the ideal of the statesman. In fact, to Confucius, only a moral teacher is qualified to be the statesman and every true statesman must be also a moral teacher. Ethics and politics are inseparable.

The important similarities that are found in the ethical teachings of Confucius and Aristotle should not, however, blind us to the fact that there are also some differences between these two great masters. The greatness of Confucius is in his character; the greatness of Aristotle is in his intellect. For Aristotle morality is something to be known and understood. For Confucius morality is something to be acted upon and lived with. As man, Aristotle is not particularly great. But Confucius is certainly the greatest personage in the history of China, if not in the history of the world. He preaches the doctrine of the *Chun Tzu* and he himself is the embodiment of the ideal qualities of the ideal man. Confucius is no obscurantist; he realizes the importance of knowledge as much as Aristotle does. But while Aristotle wants to be good in order to know, Confucius wants to know in order to be good. In this respect, Confucius is more like Buddha than Aristotle. Though Confucius is, first and foremost, a humanist, he is most humble and reverential in his attitude towards the supernatural. He is too humble, too reverential and too honest to dogmatize over those things which in their very nature must forever transcend human knowledge and experience. We find no trace of philosophic pride in Confucius as we sometimes find it in Aristotle. In spite of these differences, which are largely due to the difference in racial temper and tradition, their ethical doctrines are practically identical.

Somewhere in the Chinese Classics, we come across the following passage: "On the coast of the eastern sea there dwells a sage. On the coast of the western sea there dwells another sage. They live apart but their mind and spirit is the same".

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"AND WANTON OPTICS ROLL THE MELTING EYE"

by Aldous Huxley

The sunrise was magnificent. The luminary of day, like a disc of metal gilded by the Ruolz process, came up from the Ocean, as from an immense voltaic bath.

—*Jules Verne.*

POETRY and Science: a marriage has been arranged—again and again, in the minds of how many ambitious young men of letters! But either the engagement was broken off; or else, if consummated, the marriage was fertile only of abortions. *The Botanic Garden, The Loves of the Plants, Cyder,. The Fleece*—their forgotten names are legion.

On what conditions is the marriage possible? Let Wordsworth answer. "The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or the mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet's art as any upon which he is now employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings." Poetry can be made out of science, but only when the contemplation of scientific facts has modified the pattern, not only of the poet's intellectual beliefs, but of his spiritual existence as a whole—his "inscape," as Father Hopkins calls it. Information which has modified the poet's existence pattern may be expected (when skilfully "put across" in terms of art) to modify the existence pattern of his reader. In good scientific poetry the science is there, not primarily for its own sake, but because it is a modifier of existence patterns. Bad scientific poetry is of two kinds: that in which the science is meant to be a modifier of existence patterns, but, owing to the poet's incompetence as a communicator, fails to do what it was meant to do; and that in which the science is there primarily for its own sake, and not to produce an effect on existence patterns. Most professedly didactic poems are of this type.

Gnomes, as you now dissect with hammers fine
The granite rock, the noduled flint calcine;
Grind with strong arm the circling Cherts betwixt
Your pure Kaolin and Petuntses mixt.

The scientific information contained by implication in these lines would be much more effectively communicated in the prose of a geological text-book. Text-book prose exists for the purpose of imparting information as accurately as possible. To inform is only a secondary function of poetical language, which exists primarily as an instrument for the modification of existence patterns.

Information about kaolin is not likely to modify the existence pattern of any normally constituted human being, however learned in geology—though of course a lyrical poet who happened to be so learned might use a fact about kaolin to illuminate a wholly non-geological theme. The universally knowledgeable Donne made use of the most "remote discoveries" of the scientists of his time as illustrations and enrichments. Kaolin, or

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its equivalents, helped him to "put across" what he felt about love, God, death and many other pattern-modifying matters. It was as a suffering and enjoying man that he made use of his knowledge. The didactic poets, on the contrary, were, in almost all cases, primarily students. *The Botanic Garden* and *The Economy of Vegetation* provide no internal evidence to show that Erasmus Darwin's general "inscape" was modified by what he had learnt about kaolin and the like.

There is much rhymed astronomy in *The Divine Comedy*; but it is never, like Erasmus Darwin's rhymed botany and rhymed geology, ridiculous. Why is this? In the first place, Dante had an incomparable capacity for "putting things across". And in the second place, that which he put across was not merely scientific information; it was always scientific information that had modified the pattern of Dante's whole existence. "An undevout astronomer is mad." For Dante, it is evident, the heavens (the ptolemaic heavens in all their intricate detail of sphere and epicycle) proclaimed the glory of God. The most unlikely piece of information about the sun or the stars was never merely a piece of out-of-the-way information; it was indissolubly a part of that religious system which patterned the whole of Dante's existence. Most of us are ignorant where Dante was learned and skeptical about what he believed. Consequently, in such lines as:

Surge ai mortali per diverse foci la lucerna del mondo; ma da quella che quattro cerchi giunge con tre croci,

. . . con miglior corso e con migliore stella esce congiunta,

we are struck only by the musically perfect language and a certain oracular obscurity of utterance, intrinsically poetical (for the musically incomprehensible is always charged with a certain magical power). But this abracadabra of circles and crosses has a scientific meaning, this riddle is a statement of fact. Dante evidently liked conveying information in terms of riddles. Where, as in the present case, the riddling information is about the "remotest discoveries" of astronomy, no one who does not know it in advance can possibly guess the answer to the enigma. Most of *The Divine Comedy* cannot be fully understood except by those who have a special culture. (The same is true of more or less considerable parts of many other poems.)

Solving riddles is an occupation that appeals to almost all of us. All poetry consists, to a greater or less extent, of riddles, to which the answers are occasionally, as in Dante's case, scientific or metaphysical. One of the pleasures we derive from poetry is precisely the cross-word puzzler's delight in working out a problem. For certain people, this pleasure is peculiarly intense. Nature's puzzle-solvers, they tend to value poetry in proportion as it is obscure. I have known such people who, too highbrow to indulge in the arduous imbecilities of cross-word and acrostic, sought satisfaction for an imperious yearning in the sonnets of Mallarmé and the more eccentric verses of Gerard Hopkins.

To return to our circles and crosses: when you have sufficiently mugged up the notes to your *Paradiso* you realize that, when he wrote those lines, Dante was saying something extremely definite and that he must have had before his inward eye a very precise and (what is poetically more important) a grandiose, a deeply impressive picture of the entire ptolemaic universe. Six centuries have made of Dante's science (even as Chaucer feared that they would make of his own fourteenth-century language) something "wonder nice and strange". Past literature is a charnel house of dead words, past philosophy a mine of fossil facts and theories.

And yet they spake them so,
And sped as well in love as men now do.

Chaucer protested in advance against oblivion. In vain. His speech and Dante's science are dead, forgotten. What readers has *The Divine Comedy* now? A few poets, a few lovers of poetry, a few strayed cross-word puzzlers and, for the rest, a diminish-

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ing band of culture-fans and erudition-snobs. These last feel as triumphantly superior in their exclusive learning as would the social snob if, alone of all his acquaintance, he had met the Prince of Wales, or could speak of Mr. Michael Arlen by his pet name. Even in Dante's day the cultured few who knew offhand that *da quella che giunge quattro cerchi con tre croci* was the esoteric pet name of sunrise at the equinox must have felt a certain glow of conscious superiority. Now, six centuries later, these knowledgeable ones are justified in going off into positive raptures of self-satisfaction. Deathless verse dies like all the rest. A good dose of science can be relied on, as we see in Dante's case, to abbreviate its immortality.

An undevout astronomer is mad; but even madder is a believing and practising one. So, at any rate, Lucretius thought. That was why he wanted to convert everyone to science. For most men are sane; convert them and they will automatically cease to be pious. The spectacle of human life lying "foully prostrate upon earth, crushed down by the weight of religion" was something that moved Lucretius to righteous anger. His aim was to destroy the tyrant, to see that religion was "put under foot and trampled on in turn". For Dante, the heavens in all their intricacy of detail movingly proclaimed the glory of God; for Lucretius they no less movingly proclaimed God's impersonality, almost His non-existence. To both poets "the remotest discoveries" of the scientists were profoundly and humanly important.

The centuries have passed, and the science of Lucretius and Dante is mostly obsolete and untrue. In spite of the ardor and enthusiasm with which they wrote, in spite of their prodigious powers of communication, it is as students primarily, as archeologists that we now read what they composed as suffering and enjoying beings. Leaving out of account the non-scientific, "human" parts of the two poems, the only passages in *De Rerum Natura* and *The Divine Comedy* which still move us as their authors meant them to move, are those in which the poets generalize —those in which, by statement or implication, they set forth the hypothesis which their information about "remote discoveries" is supposed to prove and proceed to show how this hypothesis, if accepted, must affect our attitude towards the world, modify the pattern of our being. Lucretius's statements of the materialist and Dante's of the spiritualist philosophy still have power to modify our existence pattern, even though most of the "facts" on which they based their respective philosophies are now no more than archeological specimens.

The facts and even the peculiar jargon of science can be of great service to the writer whose intention is mainly ironical. Juxtapose two accounts of the same human event, one in terms of pure science, the other in terms of religion, esthetics, passion, even common sense; their discord will set up the most disquieting reverberations in the mind. Juxtapose, for example, physiology and mysticism (Mme Guyon's ecstasies were most frequent and most spiritually significant in the fourth month of her pregnancies); juxtapose acoustics and the music of Bach (perhaps I may be permitted to refer to the simultaneously scientific and esthetic account of a concert in my novel, *Point Counter Point*); juxtapose chemistry and the soul (the ductless glands secrete among other things our moods, our aspirations, our philosophy of life). This list of linked incompatibles might be indefinitely prolonged. We live in a world of *non sequiturs*. Or rather, we would live in such a world if we were always conscious of all the aspects under which any event can be considered. But in practice we are almost never aware of more than one aspect of each event at a time. Our life is spent first in one water-tight compartment of experience, then in another. The artist can, if he so desires, break down the bulkheads between the compartments and so give us a simultaneous view of two or more of them at a time. So

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seen, reality looks exceedingly queer. Which is how the ironist and the perplexed questioner desire it to look. Laforgue constantly makes use of this device. All his poetry is a mixture of remote discovery with near sentiment. Hence its pervading quality of irony. In the remote future, when a science infinitely better informed than ours shall have bridged the now enormous gulf between immediately apprehended qualities, in terms of which we *live*, and the merely measurable, ponderable quantities in terms of which we do our scientific thinking, the Laforguean method will cease to be ironical. For the juxtaposition will then be a juxtaposition of compatibles, not of incompatibles. There will be no curious discord, but a perfectly plain and simple harmony. But all this is for the future. So far as we are concerned the bringing together of remote discoveries and near feelings is productive of literary effects which we recognize as ironical.

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ROBERT BROWNING — MONOLOGIST

by John Macy

"Well, anyhow, here the story stays,
So far at least as I understand;
And, Robert Browning, you writer of plays,
Here's a subject made to your hand!"

So BROWNING concludes "A Light Woman", published in *Men and Women,* in 1855, nine years after he had finished *Luria,* his last play in conventional five-act form. He had been led or misled into attempting dramatic composition by Macready, the actor-manager, who was trying without much success to encourage English men of letters to write for the theatre, and who was, oddly enough, enthusiastic about the quite undramatic *Paracelsus.* Browning's first effort at drama, *Strafford,* was performed five times. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,* also written at Macready's request and produced by him, was taken off the boards after a few performances, as a result of a quarrel between author and actor. *Colombe's Birthday,* produced in 1853, did not prosper on the stage. Though Browning still regarded himself as a "writer of plays" and perhaps gave up his ambition to be a practical playwright only because of unfortunate circumstances and the difficulties of the theatre, yet the real difficulty was in himself. The Muses had not designed Browning, or Tennyson or Swinburne, to be dramatists but consigned them to the silent closet-drama of print. Victorian genius accomplished almost everything that man can do with words except contribute to the kind of drama which is both literary and theatrical. There is no fine comedy between Sheridan and Gilbert (a Victorian indeed!), and no tragedy much worth seeing and hearing (a bow of respectful retraction to the surviving elders who have seen Lawrence Barrett as Richelieu and Henry Irving as Becket).

Browning's shortcomings as a dramatist are not due to his lack of stagecraft or construction or the mechanics which a journeyman can learn, and the admiring critics are probably wrong who think that a skilful stage carpenter or "play-doctor" could fit his plays for production by amputations. Browning was not inherently, instinctively dramatic, even on paper, and he all but misuses the word in "Dramatic Lyrics", "Dramatic Romances"; they are all, rather, Lyrical Soliloquies, Romantic Monologues. The stories are often thrilling, the situations packed full of dramatic possibilities and bursting with enough emotional power to furnish forth a dozen playmakers, a few novelists and short-story writers and leave some to spare. His characters are varied in their circumstances, sex, virtues, vices, but he never gets himself behind one of them and allows it to speak for itself in any language but Browningese. His work is an immense series of one-man parts from *Pauline* to the triumphant *Epilogue.* When he disclaims sonnet-singing about himself, he is announcing the greatest

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untruth that can be uttered about him. From first to last he sang (if not in sonnets) or prosaically spoke himself. Not even Byron is more continuously his own hero, though Browning has too much self-respect and humor to be offensively thrasonical. Indeed it may be a kind of burly modesty that accounts for his favorite device of putting his ideas into the mouths of assumed characters. But the mask is so thin as to be almost nonexistent, and when he takes it off and speaks in his declared first person direct to the audience, as in the wistfully jocular, "British public, ye who love me not", and in the beautiful tremulous "One Word More", there is no change of voice, tone, style, or idiom. His enormous experimental variety and fertility keep him from being monotonous in an unfavorable sense of the word; it is amazing how much of him you can read without getting tired, how his strength often lifts his very tediums above boredom and somnolence. He does march breast forward, even through a thicket of ideas that have not grown to trees, singing and talking copiously in inexhaustible exhilaration. He made up his mind quite early to be Robert Browning the poet, by the grace of God and Shelley, and he succeeded in being it, was thoroughly conscious and proud of it. He had a right to be an egotist, and that is why he did not have to pose and swagger.

To say that Browning always spoke Browning is much more than to repeat the commonplace that every writer in some way writes about himself. It is especially to say why Browning was not a dramatist. Browning himself explains, or at least shows that he understands, the difficulty and the difference, in his one professional prose piece, the "Essay on Shelley", written at the request of the publisher Moxon, as an introduction to some supposed newly discovered letters of Shelley. The letters were found, immediately before publication, to be spurious, and the edition was suppressed. Browning's essay might have been suppressed too, but perhaps it is as well that one or two copies survived and that the essay was reprinted by the Shelley Society in 1888, the year before Browning died; for it has a curious interest as showing that Browning, almost alone of great English poets, could not write prose. This strange disability is also shown by the letters, especially the dull love letters, and by the notes and elucidations to his poems, which elucidate little, though a fact now and then contrives to emerge. The incapacity to think in prose is the very fault with Browning's style as a poet, the tangle of parentheses and dashes and dependent clauses of dubious attachment, the staggering inability of a strong man to march firmly forward in a straight line.

What he does say of Shelley is good, once you get it. He sees that Shelley is "the subjective poet of modern classification", his poetry is "substantive, projected from himself". "We are ignorant what the inventor of *Othello* conceived of that fact as he beheld it in completeness, how he accounted for it, under what known law he registered its nature, or to what unknown law he traced its coincidence." Precisely so. We do not need to know of Shakespeare or Æschylus who the man was or what he thought, though to know may be interesting in itself and somewhat illuminating to the work. It is fascinating to read about Sheridan in Parliament, but his whole public career does not add more than a superfluous spark to the blazing *Rivals*. Browning, whose external life is not eventful, except for his literary romantic marriage, lives wholly in his internal autobiography; he must tell you how every fact is related, and beheld, and accounted for, and registered and traced. And this is true in spite of the apparently contradictory fact that he often packs a story into a few lines and leaves it only half told, sometimes finely and subtly suggested, sometimes vexingly undeveloped, unrealized. His so-called psychological insight into characters, their often adroit, involved explanation

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of themselves, is only insight into his own mind and emotions. He does not identify himself objectively with his characters; he identifies them with Robert Browning, and confusion often follows from mistaken identity of that kind. The purpose in telling the story of *The Ring and The Book* twelve times may be to reveal character, to raise the sordid murder to universal significance by having it "beheld" from several points of view. The effective reason is that it gives Robert Browning twelve opportunities to explain himself apropos of the murder. Whatever the merit of this may be—and there is the immense merit of repetitive mass and impressiveness—it is a merit that is precisely the opposite, the negation, of whatever is essentially dramatic.

II

It may be arrogant to say that Browning, who was so solidly sure of himself and whose achievement bids you be modest and receptive, did not understand himself. Yet one dares to say it, now that he no longer overawes us. And we can say too that some of his most devoted admirers misunderstood him by regarding him as profoundly philosophic, by mistaking simple ideas inadequately expressed for prophetic wisdom too deep for utterance, by failing to see that Browning failed in what he was evidently and avowedly laboring to accomplish. For in that same essay on Shelley he rightly, if somewhat turgidly, says that the poet looks in his own soul to find a suggestion of the Infinite. He is "impelled to embody the thing he perceives, not so much with reference to the many below as to the one above him, the supreme Intelligence which apprehends all things in their absolute truth . . . the *Ideas* of Plato, seeds of creation lying burningly on the Divine Hand,—it is toward these that he struggles". Shelley was always in the throes of that struggle. He was, for all his immaturity of thought, a philosophic poet in temperament. Browning, who lived and wrote long, never was that, even in the limited sense that Wordsworth was.

Browning lived to see the establishment of Browning Societies, which no doubt flattered him but which he viewed with reticent and slightly uncomfortable aloofness. His work was subjected to analysis and exegesis, as though he were an apostle of great and holy ideas. In an age which is quite unjustly accused of neglecting poetry it is a wholesome thing to make a serious, almost religious, cult of a worthy poet before his death. In Boston, where fifty years ago there were perhaps more readers of Browning than in London, devotion continued well into the time when Browning had fallen a little out of fashion and the irreverent young preferred Kipling. As late as the last year of the World War the *Evening Transcript* reported that "The Boston Browning Society is doing its bit by preparing a booklet of selections from the poet's writings for use in American military camps and in the trenches". There might have been a message of cheer for the boys from the poet who believed that right would triumph, whatever happened, and whose confidence in manliness and courage extended beyond the insularity of the Poet Laureate to include the French ("Incident of the French Camp" and "Hervé Riel"). But the consolations of philosophy, either as a practical defence against the difficulties of life or as a serene exercise of the speculative faculty, are not to be found in him, and the attempt of his admirers to assimilate his naïve ideas to the profundities of German metaphysics results only in a double complication of some simple thoughts which he had not always succeeded in making clear.

Browning's amateurish erudition and his habit of alluding to esoteric ideas and to unfamiliar details of history and biography with an air of knowing all about them and of assuming knowledge on the part of his reader often call for annotations and even justify the existence of Berdoe's *Browning Cyclopædia*. But more often the puzzling

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passages may be skipped lightly over without much loss to essential poetry or serious impairment of the reader's enjoyment. Browning's obscurity has been exaggerated by the very idolators who seek to clarify him; it is more often due to the inadequacy of his conception and of his expression than to an immense depth of thought which demands and rewards patient searching. You plunge into what appears to be a fathomless sea, and your head promptly strikes bottom; the dislocation of your neck is due to the resolute effort of the leap and not to the innocent shallow which the honest poet never intended to make deceptively abysmal.

At the close of the nineteenth century a young poet and philosopher, Santayana, worshipper of beauty and of reason, effectively disposed of Browning's pretensions, or rather, the pretensions imputed to him by some of his students, to philosophic and prophetic sublimity. It does not detract from Browning's real value to deny him what he does not possess and to ascribe to him "that deepest of all failures, the failure in rationality and the indifference to perfection". Yet Santayana's definition, or use, of "barbarism" is exquisitely narrow, and his definition of civilization as applied to Italy ("Italy has always been a civilized country . . . it preserved a civilized heart") is suspiciously suggestive of a kind of Latin provincialism which prevents a full view of the thoroughly British Browning.

The "message" of Browning is indeed elementary, a blind optimism in the face of facts. The only intolerably false thing about "Pippa Passes" is Pippa. The crimes and intrigues, including the foul plot against herself, which Pippa's lyric innocence thwarts by unbelievable magic, are at least good melodrama in substance; and the savage breast, which music is not merely to soothe but to convert instantaneously, is made violently savage. It is, moreover, darkly voluptuous, for Browning, like every full-blooded person, enjoys that sort of thing, and he erects in high colors an elaborate lasciviousness in order to knock it down with a moral feather. The paramour who is about to crown his mistress "magnificent in sin" is interrupted by Pippa's most famous importunate song and undergoes sudden reformation:

> That little peasant's voice
> Has righted all again.

Paramours are more likely to curse the intruder and continue in their nefarious ways.

Courage and optimism and loud cheers for righteousness are stimulating and sustaining up to a certain point; when they go beyond credible human experience they defeat themselves by their falsity and have no ethical value at all. Among Victorian poems and passages which have fine literary and musical quality and rank above mere silly sentimental versifying, the palm for triumphant optimism should be bestowed upon the world's favorite song of Pippa, the "somehow good" stanzas of "In Memoriam", and Henley's "Invictus". They make one turn for spiritual refreshment to "The City of Dreadful Night". Optimism so assertive that it betrays its own doubts, faith in a God too nebulous to be quite personified in an intimate and understandable Christ (hereditary evangelicism mingled in Browning with latter-day scepticism, intellectual curiosity and a bewildered groping toward the discoveries of science), a hearty will to face the facts of life and then renounce them or explain them away with an argument that arrives nowhere, a helter-skelter and indiscriminate praise for all conventional manly and womanly virtues—these are the total content of Browning's moral message and philosophy.

III

The scenes of many of Browning's most powerful poems are laid in Italy. He does not take Italian stories over in the grand piratical manner of the Elizabethans and naturalize them in English with a superb

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disregard of geography, history and national character. His Italy is a great gorgeous playground of crime and holiday joy in which a visiting Englishman, sober at home, is at liberty to be emotionally drunk. Browning literally revels in Italy. It is a spectacle and a sensation, a physically living thing to touch and fondle for thrills, as a man away from home fondles a foreign woman. But Browning did not understand Italy; he saw its surfaces and felt some of its passions; he was never saturated with it, was never thoroughly at home in its atmosphere and in the sound of its essential speech; he is not dyed in its hues, but colors what he sees with his aggressively English and intensely personal vision. Other Englishmen, like John Addington Symonds, have become intellectual citizens of Italy without losing their English mother tongue and habit of thought; even Ruskin sees clearly what his eyes happen to fall upon, though he remains incurably a man from the North and in his critical reverence for Italy as a monument he misses the life. After many years of residence and travel in Italy and much reading in Italian literature Browning struck not much deeper into the Italian spirit, ancient or modern, than in his superficial and sketchy poem, "The Englishman in Italy", written when he was thirty-two after a brief visit to the land of enchantment—which did not enchant him but only entertained him.

It is not merely a question of language, of translating Italy into English; any language properly used can fairly well express a foreign country even if it cannot catch the native accent. Browning's special kind of English, word and thought, sounds perversely inappropriate and foreign. His British insularity encloses a narrow inner island, his peculiar idiom. His Italians are uncouth, even his artists; and uncouthness, whatever their wild deviltries and debaucheries, is one gross failing which is not to be found in their recorded lives and their work. In "Fra Lippo Lippi" the situation which can be disentangled from the verbiage is this: the great artist, "a poor monk out of bounds", is caught on a midnight escapade in an alley "where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar". To those who intercept him he tells the story of his life from his boyhood as a starving waif, through his education as a painter under monastic discipline, his rages against that discipline, and, in conclusion, his plan for a picture in which he, the creative artist, is to be the chief figure; the picture, as the painter is made to describe or narrate it, is an animated cartoon straining graphic immobility. But what rips Browning's canvas from upper left hand corner to lower right is his diction. "Zooks", begins the third line, and the twenty-third, and the poem ends "Zooks!". The word would be fitting in the mouth of an English soldier in a romance by Walter Scott. You might search the dictionary for an expletive less suited to an Italian artist of the *quattrocento*, who had a variety of mellifluous and eloquent oaths. It would be foolish to quibble over one word, but this particular word is only one example of a score in this single poem (note also the horrible pun on Uz and Us) and of thousands, in other poems, which destroy illusion—illusion, the one thing which it is the immediate purpose of poetry to create.

Browning can create illusion with blazing vividness when his great voice is not choked by verbal ineptitudes. He is a sensationalist, a producer and evoker of swift feeling which is sometimes retarded by slow thought or breaks through a lingering meditation as if impatient of the delaying encumbrance. He is the poet when he puts "the harp back to his heart again". In "Andrea del Sarto" the loquacious painter's discourse is simple enough for an Italian to understand if it were rendered into fair Tuscan.

"Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside. . . .
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold."

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Those lines might be spoken by any husband to any wife, if she were a radiant blonde; they make a picture, and there is music even in the monosyllables.

Immediate sensations are universal, and in the instant communication of them Browning's images flash, startle and waylay. Sustained thought and coherence of feeling are more difficult matters. To demand them of Browning is to miss his genius and knock at the wrong door. Ruskin thought that "The Bishop Orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church" told more than any other piece in modern English of the Renaissance spirit, "its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin", but that the writing is so concentrated as to need much solution "before the reader can fairly get the good of it". The answer to that is that Ruskin himself did not understand the Renaissance, that one of the characteristics of the central Renaissance, as it has come down to us in its many capable spokesmen, was precisely not ignorance of itself but an alert critical awareness of itself not surpassed by the human mind since the Greeks, and that condensed wisdom about a whole period is not to be found and is not attempted in the valedictory babblings of a dying man. The theme of the poem is chaotic senility of mind, an extraordinarily clear presentation—which is not paradoxical in the least—of confused memories, the ashes of reminiscence, and a last surviving unctuous ambition at the gate of death. We can usually take Browning at his face value and not read between the lines except to supply what in his strange combination of elliptical haste and garrulity he has left out. The strength of the poem is in its sensuous phrasing, in the transient illuminations; as he might say, in the blue spurt of the match that lights the dark:

> Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
> As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.

Browning's other bishop, Blougram, is better company, for through him Browning gives play to his humor and irony and as much of cynicism as a robust optimist can indulge in. Humor is not abundant among the major poets and prophets of the nineteenth century. The writers of fiction are rich in it, but on the highest peaks in the other ranges of literature there are few glints of fun; the light of merriment falls on Carlyle and Meredith, and, of those who are primarily poets, upon Browning alone. He might have written—

> "You see this pebble-stone? It's a thing I bought
> Of a bit of a chit of a boy i' the mid o' the day—
> I like to dock the smaller parts-o'-speech,
> As we curtail the already cur-tailed cur
> (You catch the paranomasia, play 'po' words?)"—

but he left Charles Stuart Calverley to write it for him. When Browning cuts capers with fantastic rhymes and nonsensical internal caprices, sometimes in a poem which seems to be serious, he is not "grotesque" or unwillingly awkward, for he is almost as much a master of metrical devices as Swinburne. He is simply holding out his left hand to his joyous contemporaries, Calverley and Lewis Carroll and W. S. Gilbert. His fooling lacks the finesse of the deliberately comic poets, but his apparently insane rhymes are not, like some of Mrs. Browning's, due to a faulty technique. He bubbles over with high spirits and lets himself go with a wild relish for cacophonetic absurdities. He is a child of Hudibras as well as a neighbor of Edward Lear. His laughter has disconcerted some of his critics who wish their poet to be always in full metrical uniform, except when he is taking a holiday to amuse the children with "The Pied Piper".

Sometimes the excess of cleverness runs riotously into jingling doggerel not in tune with the subject. "The Flight of the Duchess", though not of tragic gravity, is in substance a serious romantic tale. It crackles

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with rhymes of compound ingenuity, funny enough, but when you have lent your ear to them long their perverse incongruity tangles the yarn in mere verbal adventure. "Instinct, quince-tinct; Hell free, belfry; eye-holes, viols; balcony, falcon eye; syllable, ill able; Visit I've, inquisitive; ins-and-outs, thin sand doubts; that's all, begat Saul; wreathy hop, Ethiop; equine, weak wine." The next poem, "A Grammarian's Funeral", on the lofty theme of devotion to an ideal, is full of tongue twisters: "Cock-crow, rock-row; fabric, dab brick; far gain, bargain; failure, pale lure; based *Oun,* waist down; loosened, dew send". In his exuberant youth the poet's ruddy countenance is mottled with rhymitis. Sometimes the very bizarrerie of sound and image perfectly expresses the idea, as in "Popularity", on vulgar imitation of inexplicable genius; the dye flows beautifully through the poem until it runs into the crinkled distortion of the last stanza:

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

And what meaning could John Keats have found in those lines, whose strangeness is not the magic of fairyland?

IV

Browning's masterpiece, *The Ring and the Book,* is a masterpiece chiefly in bulk. In the literature of the world very few long poems are large in conception and sustained in execution, like a cathedral vastly designed and beautiful in detail. In English poetry *Paradise Lost* stands alone, and it has dull passages that hang heavy on the structure and are not lovely to look at. Nobody can honestly regret that Spenser did not finish *The Faerie Queene* or that Wordsworth did not carry out the dreary project of "The Recluse". But among the long poems in English *The Ring and the Book* at least has the distinction of making one glad that it was completed; if one cannot enjoy it all one does feel like cheering when the tremendous thing is done. The appalling amplitude and unfailing vigor of it to the last triumphant page in praise of Art, are admirable, heroic. Yet *The Ring and the Book* is not a developed idea, worked out as a unit. Rather it is an amorphous series of twelve elaborate variations on a theme. The effect is not progressive but cumulative. The theme is simple, an atrocious murder of an innocent young wife and her foster parents. The whole *procès verbal* of the case, "pure crude fact", was found in a book which Browning picked up in Florence, rough ore to be fashioned into a golden ring. The story itself is not so thrilling as many a celebrated case in the history of crime, but is worth one fairly detailed narrative. It is the stuff of melodrama, not of high tragedy, and as Browning tells it, it lacks suspense and climax. So that the various versions are not so much stories as retrospective commentaries and discussions; the whole ends where it begins. What has been developed is several aspects or points of view, not well correlated, except that they deal from different angles with the same plot.

In his concluding verses Browning says, speaking in his own person:

Why take the artistic way to prove so much?
Because, it is the glory and good of Art,
That Art remains the one way possible
Of speaking truth, to mouths like mine at least.
. . . Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought, . . .
So write a book shall mean beyond the facts,
Suffice the eye and save the soul beside.

The trouble is that Browning's plan is not artistic. It is amazingly audacious and is carried out with that colossal energy and that undaunted will to undertake a huge enterprise which are characteristic of the greater Elizabethans and Victorians. There is meaning enough in Browning's repeated turnings

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and expositions of the facts; he is not guilty of the mere long-windedness of facile versifiers, he has plenty to say, but he says too much. He is not verbose but prolix. Pompilia, dying and bewildered child, sighs, "All poetry is difficult to read", and one echoes that with an added sigh, when there is so much poetry about one simple single thing.

True poetic art imposes order on chaos; it does not draw life, as some realists pretend, but redraws and redesigns it into shapeliness and loveliness; it gives clarified, not perplexed significance to the awful confusions of life. Then poetry is not difficult to read, but is in a way easier than prose, as one who understood and overcame the difficulty said and exemplified two centuries before Browning. A magnificent achievement wrought with dynamic fortitude and doughty defiance of the reader's patience, *The Ring and the Book* leaves the material, not in the same but in just as headless and tailless a confusion as it probably was in the original collection of documents. The book is there and can be read, with effort, but the ring, the very perfection of form, is not there. The twelve thick pillars do not hold up a unifying thought or mutually support each other, but three of them, with a few words to outline the theme and make clear the events, might stand alone, each as an impressive single structure. In "Pompilia", "Caponsacchi", "The Pope", we have all the emotion that the story contains and as near an approach to living speaking characters as Browning's manner of speech can achieve. In "Pompilia" he succeeds, for once, in adapting his tone to the assumptive speaker and with her accents he touches pathos, pity, and terror. She is the heart of the poem and gives it something like organic life. There is Browning's own heart, which he did not conceal but wore on the sleeve of every costume wherewith he draped his figures. And his heart is in the beautiful lines which conclude the first section of *The Ring and the Book*, the "posy" beginning:

> O lyric Love, half angel and half bird,
> And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
> Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
> Took sanctuary within the holier blue, . . .

That is a nugget of the pure gold of Browning, whether or not fashioned into a ring. He is a poet not of any one long masterpiece but of short poems and passages, which taken together are an opulent totality. He needs an anthologist to do what Matthew Arnold did for Wordsworth. Like Wordsworth he can fill with his excellent best a Golden Treasury all his own. Like Wordsworth, too, he has two voices, or rather three. One we can silence by the individual act of editing which consists of rapidly turning the page; the conscientious Browning scholars may be trusted to rescue the choice bits that we have missed, if they will not insist on preserving too much of the dross. The other two voices can be listened to without weariness, even with acute and uplifting joy. They are the conversational manner, conveying narrative or intimate reflections upon life, and pure lyricism, full-throated and deep-chested, at once spontaneous and expertly practised. Though the tale told as it was told to me, or as the chief actor might have uttered his experience, is a method as old as poetry, yet Browning may almost be said to have invented the form which he employs with profuse variations in "Dramatis Personæ" and in the lyrics, idyls, and romances. And of like merit with them are the many outbursts of impassioned speech which rise in splendid moments of inspiration from the longer dramas and narratives. "My Last Duchess", in which a tragedy is condensed into sixty lines; the joyous hymn to day which introduces "Pippa"; the first sections of "Saul"; the racing "Last Ride Together", which gallops past the final word into some jubilant eternity; the vision of Shelley, bright and obscure, in "Memorabilia"; "Home-Thoughts from Abroad" ("Oh, to be in England"); "James Lee's Wife". In these and in a hun-

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dred others is indeed God's own plenty, with somewhat of the Devil's affluence thrown in to boot.

Across Browning's vision fly swarms of images, analogies, suggestions and hints which he captures and compresses or leaves at loose ends in such writhing, jostling numbers that they strain the confines of syntax; before you see one steadily and clearly another is under your eye in bewildering kaleidoscopic replacements. Then the swift succession suddenly slows down to a winding intricacy. Swinburne in a flush of rhapsodical admiration, taking his figure from Pope (of all unlike and unlikely poets for such association!) cries that this man Browning lives along the line like a spider. The figure does suggest Browning's metaphorical richness, the multitudinous radiations of his thought; it suggests too the cunning yet haphazard attachments to solidity, the shimmering design which holds together even when the circumference is unsymmetrical and the center is marked only by his presence. Browning has been called Shakespearean, as every great poet must sooner or later be called by some eulogistic critic. He is Shakespearean in one respect, his wealth of verbal resource and his prodigality of images. Shakespeare, master builder of stage plays, will halt his action when he feels like it to let his fancy fly, as when Macbeth stops at a breathlessly fearful moment to pour out a gorgeous eruption of similitudes about sleep. Browning, who is no master maker of plays or of straight running narrative (except in shorter units) throws off poetic conceits in an intoxicating swirl. It is that very richness rather than any deep originality or forbidding strangeness of theme which makes him sometimes hard to read. And it is that, and no vast view of life, which makes him endlessly worth reading. "The poets pour us wine" . . . "stark strength" . . . "sheer sweet". Browning pours wine continuously, when he does not interrupt himself with too much talk and purposeless musing; he pours from many bottles into the glass of every lover who cares to sit at the sumptuous banquet. As at an earlier Symposium the entertainment will be found to consist of informal talk and good companionship rather than of orderly discourse—if there is order underneath, it is at least concealed and implied and not to be taken for ultimate wisdom. The conversation in Browning, as in Plato, is really monologue, divided up for convenience and to admit contrasting and opposing ideas.

The dominant mood, the net result of it all, is a great celebration of healthy-mindedness, exemplified in songs, tales, anecdotes, meditations and speculations. No matter what the immediate subject, even if it be horrible or gloomy, the zest and gusto seldom fail. In mind and body Browning was always eupeptic, hearty, just florid enough, never in danger of apoplexy. And this much can be said for healthy-mindedness, rapturous optimism, trust in God, the Universe and the League of Nations—that though it offends your reason and provokes a wry sardonic smile, it does make for good digestion, long life and courage to face the very world in whose perpetual excellence you cannot believe. Excitement, if you are blessed with the strength to keep it up, even the more sedentary passionate contemplation, is better than depression. It is no wonder that the Victorians, who lived life heartily and energetically, who were very gourmands for work and play, came to accept Browning cordially after they got over the initial perplexities. And in our age of scepticism and disillusion, generous doses of him are tonic and palatable even to weak constitutions and delicate tastes. His work is not conclusive nor organically whole; it is a series of lusty and vivacious preludes which might be called Invitation to the Dance of Life. The invitation is irresistible, compelling, a mighty triumph.

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WANTED: UNEMPLOYED WRITERS

TO STUDY AMERICAN LITERARY PROBLEMS

by C. Hartley Grattan

It is no part of my purpose to barge into the preserves of the well-informed and dictate to them how they shall work fields they are already assiduously cultivating. I do not even pretend to write an exhaustive study of my subject and I have no doubt that many readers of this piece will be able to offer suggestions for its elaboration. But I should like to place before intelligent readers some of the many problems in American literature that cry out for intelligent handling. The problems are various in nature, ranging from syntheses and interpretations to narrowly intensive investigations; and so the field is open to students of all temperaments, philosophical, fact-grubbing—even to the literary detective. Perhaps some of the problems are not to be solved, though that should be, to the adventurous, an incentive rather than a deterrent to action. That so much should remain to be done when so vast a machinery of research is constantly in operation may amaze the uninformed, but it certainly does not startle the judicious, who are only too well aware of the tendency of the "research trust" to turn instinctively to the unilluminating and the ludicrous.

The broader aspects of the subject have been effectively treated in *The Reinterpretation of American Literature*, edited by Norman Foerster and written by Professor Foerster and his associates, Professors Pattee, Hubbell, Jones, Murdock, Kaufman, Parrington, Schlesinger and Clark. Although these men deal with different topics they are in general agreement on one broad conclusion: that the literary history of America needs to be rewritten, even though *The Cambridge History of American Literature* is less than fifteen years old.

Professor Foerster emphasizes his view that practically the whole of America's literary development has taken place under the aegis of Romanticism. Professor Kaufman takes up Romanticism in detail and attempts to isolate some of its characteristics with reference to specific writers, pointing to the necessity of intensive studies of this sort. As to what the characteristic Romantic ideas are Professor Kaufman writes: "Let us say that it includes a recovery of the past as an effort to broaden emotional and imaginative outlooks; the revolt against tradition and authority in whatever area of human concern; humanitarian sympathy including new interests in humble life and assertion of individual rights; a fresh perception of nature; the renascence of wonder; and in general an ascendency of feeling and imagination".

Now the task of isolating these ideas in our major writers will illuminate many obscure points, and will also bring into the picture many forgotten authors whose books have served as fuel to better minds. This

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brings us around to Professor Schlesinger's proposal that historians of literature become in a sense social historians and consider the psychological significance of esthetically worthless books in the formation of mass opinions and tastes. He points out that popular education gave a reading ability to large numbers; that technicological changes were responsible for the wide distribution of printed matter; and that it was on this popular culture that the finer spirits perforce erected their works and reputations. Emerson was able to lecture to the masses even if he could not sell his books in large quantities, showing a link between the highest thought and the plebeian mind. Furthermore, many readers progressed up from McGuffey's readers to Emerson; and so perhaps an analysis of McGuffey's works will give us insight into the vagaries of American taste in the period of their popularity. Again, we know that Hawthorne wrote for the "annuals" and "gift-books" but we do not carry in our minds any clear realization of what company he was keeping. This field has been worked over once but can profitably be gone into again. (It is amusing to note that the annual, transmogrified, has survived into our day: *The American Caravan.*)

The connections between classic writers and the socio-cultural situation in which they worked is a large topic with endless possibilities. Professor Schlesinger points out that no one has yet measured the influence of Noah Webster and his dictionaries and spelling books. Some information on this point can be found in Professor George Philip Krapp's *The English Language in America.* A monograph on Webster would not be amiss. To depart from Professor Schlesinger's suggestions, let us note that a recent study of Mrs. Sigourney (*Mrs. Sigourney: The Sweet Singer of Hartford* by G. S. Haight) revealed the extraordinary badness of her poetry and the fact that she was important enough for Poe to solicit her contributions to *Graham's.* We have long realized that Poe worked in an environment of "scribbling females", as Hawthorne called them. We have known too little about them, and *Mrs. Sigourney* offers the information entertainingly. We know too little about Poe's acquaintance with the occult and pseudo-psychological literature which flourished in his time. A little light is cast upon this subject in S. Foster Damon's *Thomas Holley Chivers.* Indeed Professor Damon's monograph suggests that here is a rich and amusing field open to someone. We have long laughed at the great variety of religious and other cults which have flourished in this country but we know almost nothing about the connections between these cults and the intellectuals. If the faddists and cultists of Poe's day seem idiotic to posterity, how is a free mind to view the connections established by contemporary American literary lights with Orage, Gurdjieff and Keyserling? This weakness for the vague and the "mystical" is a permanent part of the American mind, and if Poe wrote *Eureka* in jumbled accents, Waldo Frank has written *The Rediscovery of America* in mud with a blunt stick.

To return to *The Reinterpretation*, let us consider the question of the frontier. Professor Hubbell deals incisively with this topic both as subject-matter and as an influence. The former is the easiest to study, but we have as yet but one major general contribution to the field, R. L. Rusk's *Literature of the Middle Western Frontier* and one study of a particular figure, John Donald Wade's *Augustus Baldwin Longstreet.* There is a plethora of material for future students. Study of it will help us to understand various major and minor American writers. For instance, the formative years of Mark Twain are as yet inadequately understood, but a drive in the right direction was made by Franklin J. Meine's anthology, *Tall Tales of the Southwest.* There is every reason to believe that Mark Twain's roots are to be found entwined in these tales. A revolutionary con-

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tribution to the understanding of Twain will be made when the subject is adequately investigated. Fortunately Mr. Bernard de Voto has in preparation a study which will perhaps clear up the question shortly. The matter of the influence of the frontier is more difficult. We have, in this field, L. L. Hazard's *The Frontier in American Literature*, a somewhat overdrawn but suggestive book, and a handful of dogmatic generalizations. The Brooks-Mumford school of critics is particularly apt to write down the frontier influence as uniformly bad, and certain aspects of the philosophy of William James have been written about as frontier in origin in condemnatory accents. Is the frontier influence to be dismissed as pernicious? We do not know positively. There is need for intensive work on the nature of the frontier psychology and of the reverberations of the frontier attitude in the more settled parts of the country. It may just be that as an *influence* the frontier was a leavening factor of immense value.

If Mr. Foerster's generalization to the effect that American literary history is a matter of European culture and American environment is true, then Howard Mumford Jones's paper on "The European Background" is profoundly important. Professor Jones has contributed one volume in this field, *America and French Culture*, and promises more. The topic, however, is inexhaustible: America and German culture (a large part of the background of the New England renaissance), America and Russian culture (I merely suggest: the Russian writers as introduced by Henry James, Howells and others), the large topic of America and British culture, and so on endlessly. A valuable contribution to this field is F. I. Carpenter's *Emerson and Asia*. A recent attempt to discuss the interaction of Western and Eastern ideas in the writings of Lafcadio Hearn, *Blue Ghost* by Jean Temple, was unfortunately a failure. The task, a fascinating and difficult one, remains open.

I think we may rest here without laying claim to having exhausted the suggestions embodied in *The Reinterpretation of American Literature* which I have thus far used as a touchstone. The careful reader will find the book a mine of stated and implied ideas for serious students to work out.

So if these wide fields, vague in outline, rather overwhelm the prospective student, perhaps some of the following topics will appeal to him. There is still no comprehensive history of American literary criticism, nor is there a serviceable anthology of criticism. *The Cambridge History* does not treat the subject as a separate division of literature. Professor Foerster's two volumes, *American Criticism* and *Toward Standards*, do no more than break the ground. The first is a study in the literary ideas of Poe, Emerson, Lowell and Whitman. The second is a survey of some of the critics of the last few years to serve as a background for an advocacy of humanism. Mr. Foerster has also contributed an anthology to this field which is far from being comprehensive or even representative, even taken together with William Morton Payne's volume (published in 1904). Here is a job, or two jobs for one man, which will open up a virgin territory. The writer who undertakes it will need a fine flair for knowing where to look and an infinite capacity for burrowing in old periodicals. An allied task is the preparation of a history of dramatic criticism, with an accompanying anthology, to set beside Arthur Hobson Quinn's history of the American drama. To be done intelligently, the work must be undertaken by a student with as exhaustive a knowledge of the drama in America as that possessed by Professor Quinn.

An equally difficult task is the writing of a history of American taste which directly ties up with two topics mentioned above: the effect of writers of non-esthetic significance upon the socio-literary environment, and the influence of European judgments on American reading habits and judgments, as

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well as the significance of European writers in forming American taste for similar or derived work by American hands. What effect did Longfellow's adventures in translating European poetry have on the development of poetic taste in America? Did Howells, by advancing Russian, Spanish and Italian realists, prepare American taste for a stronger realism than his own? Did the introduction of Zola prepare a public for Frank Norris's attempts to localize Zola's methods? These matters working from the top down. On the other hand, working from the bottom up, such matters as the continuous appeal of sentimental literature such as that of Ik Marvel and George William Curtis (in *Prue and I*). How far were the writers of "tall tales" preparing the way for Mark Twain's realism? What about the Kathleen Norrises of history and their cultural influence? And so on. As to the effect of European judgments, we have the well-known case of Poe. Can this whole matter be treated historically with profit? What is the significance of the fact that foreign critics give Upton Sinclair a higher rating than is granted him by his critical fellow countrymen? And will it be found that writers like Longfellow and Lowell and Howells and Huneker and Percival Pollard assume a much larger place in a history of American literary taste than in a history of American literature guided by high critical standards?

There is need for a history of religious influences in American literature. (By the way, how about the influence of religion on American literary taste?) Thomas Cuming Hall in his *The Religious Background of American Culture* touches upon this topic, concluding that: "Hence it may be adduced, as an evidence of the relatively secular character of American literature, that except Hawthorne no American writer has lit up a whole religious tradition in fiction, as George Eliot has done in England or Walter Scott in Scotland, not to speak of Goldsmith or Anthony Trollope". Is it true that American literature is relatively secular? Is there not a constant and pervasive religious strain? Has not literature reflected the fact that America has been an "officially" religious country ever since the passing of the deistical political Fathers? There is no exhaustive study upon which to base an authoritative opinion. Neither is there any study of the treatment of religious matters by American writers, in fiction, say. Are there four or five decent novels about religious life like Harold Frederic's *Damnation of Theron Ware* and the Bierce-Danzinger-Voss *Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* immersed in a morass of things like Georgie Sheldon's Christian Science tracts and the violent diatribes against the Mormons? It would be interesting to know.

II

Sufficient has been said to show the ambitious student that he need never worry about having enough to do. Of course I ignore the economic question and assume that provision on that score will have been made before the work is undertaken, for obviously some of these jobs will never be rewarded in dollars and cents. It is unfortunately true that many of us perceive the tasks but never undertake them because of the butcher, the baker and the electric light company. But there are plenty of smaller tasks that can be undertaken by hard-pressed writers, and even the large ones I have indicated are sometimes accomplished in a spirit of do-and-dare-come-what-may with surprising economic rewards. Far be it from me to suggest that the best work in criticism and literary history is done by the economically secure, but a measure of freedom is indispensable if the work is not to be hurried and inadequate. In any case, the beginner usually finds it profitable to cultivate a small garden before undertaking a quarter-section.

Some of these small gardens may now be indicated. There are many well-established

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writers whose lives have been written *in extenso* who are in need of restudy. There is room for a reworking of the material on John Greenleaf Whittier. A good deal of new information has come to light since he was last treated in a comprehensive manner, and we see him more clearly than his immediate successors. With a national perspective we can isolate in his works those New Englandish elements that mark him out as the founder of a school of writing which includes Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Wilkins Freeman and Robert Frost. There is need also for a complete reworking of the material on William Cullen Bryant—a book which will present the whole man, not just the poet. It is difficult now to imagine what this new Bryant will be like; we have considered him so long as the author of "Thanatopsis", and not at all as the editor of one of the most important newspapers in America. The general outlines of his political opinions are well known, but we need to have him tied up with the social situation in which he was a partisan and critic. Until this is done we shall have but half the man. Who knows but that his reputation as a poet will diminish, and that it may turn out that Hawthorne was right in discovering in his face only "the bitter brilliance of a newspaper editor"?

James Russell Lowell offers a similar task. His political writing is better known than Bryant's, but until the whole man is presented we shall not be able to understand him. To be sure Lowell's reputation as a critic is decidedly on the down grade in spite of the efforts of the humanists to rescue him as an ancestor of their outlook. His poetry becomes less and less important from year to year and his "Biglow Papers" have been almost entirely handed over to the students of philology and political opinion. There is, as yet, no completely satisfactory life of Longfellow. Herbert Gorman's attempt to present him in the modern manner was a success so far as the modern manner goes; that is, the book was very entertaining; but as criticism it contributed nothing, for even the central idea was borrowed from Margaret Fuller.

So one could go on, enumerating the major and minor figures of the accepted canon. The official biographies become less and less satisfactory as the years pass and the material which occasionally finds its way into print only increases our impatience for a thorough reworking of the whole matter. It is perhaps fortunate that Poe never had a pompous official biographer, for the obvious injustice done him by his first commemorator inspired a later generation to look thoroughly into the matter, with the result that Poe biography is in fairly good order today. The diligence of scholars is still bringing new matter to light and, as I remarked earlier, we still need material on his background. With Walt Whitman the case is the same. Hardly a year passes without some contribution to source material being made, but Professor Holloway's *Whitman* is a very satisfying job from the standpoint of presenting the cold facts of his long career.

It is no part of my desire to review all the lives and times in existence and if I have paused over some of them it is to indicate that it is a rare figure to whom the aspiring student cannot address himself without finding some rewarding task. And even if he finds that laborious academic scholars are publishing findings in the learned journals, in M.A. and Ph.D. theses, there is still the task of reducing the material to literary form for the benefit of the intelligent reading public, to say nothing of the republic of scholars who are too inexorably driven by other duties to read every line in the learned media.

Let me, therefore, depart from even so specialized problems as lives and times and list a dozen items out of many that could be cited which demand investigation of a more or less minute sort. I shall briefly annotate each suggestion.

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1. Henry James. Some skilful detective work needs to be done to clear up the question of Henry James's real attitude toward the United States, especially the matter of his suppressed desire to return and "live his life over again" here. A detective also should find ample opportunity to exercise his talents in investigating James's relations with women.

2. Lafcadio Hearn. There is the large and wide-open question of Hearn's years between his departure from Europe and his arrival in Cincinnati. Must this period always remain blank in his biography?

3. James Russell Lowell. Someone should address himself to a study of the influence of Lowell's first wife. The results would make a valuable paper and be useful to the prospective biographer.

4. Emily Dickinson. In spite of the flood of books on Emily Dickinson it is hardly necessary to say more than that the mystery is as much a mystery as ever and there is still room for a good detective to exercise his talents. To some crotchety readers her reputation remains a dark mystery.

5. Walt Whitman. Did Whitman have any children? Was he homosexual? I have on my shelves an interesting little book on this latter question, *Walt Whitman's Anomaly,* by W. C. Rivers, but the evidence seems strained.

6. Ambrose Bierce. No one has yet solved the mystery of Bierce's disappearance. Not so long ago I received a telegram from a friend in El Paso who was in touch with a Mexican military man who believed that he could clear it up, but as yet no documents have been produced to support this. What became of Bierce's autobiography? Perhaps this is an insoluble mystery; the document may never have existed. Lastly, there are still Bierce letters floating around. A labor of love would be to hunt down every one and publish a complete collection.

7. Jack London. There is no satisfactory biography of London and little prospect that one will be written in the present generation. There is, however, the question of his suicide. Upton Sinclair believes he did commit suicide. Is this indisputable? It has never been thoroughly threshed out.

8. Harold Frederic. Frederic wrote fourteen books, though but two are ever mentioned, *The Damnation of Theron Ware* and *Seth's Brother's Wife.* The former is one of the very few respectable treatments of religious life in American fiction. The latter is taken by Professor Parrington as an important document in the history of American realism. Someone should study all of Frederic's books as well as his life in an effort to determine his exact place in American literary history. Is it possible that but two of his books are of importance? And as a person, must he remain a shadowy epigrammatist flitting in the background of Thomas Beer's *Stephen Crane*?

9. Joaquin Miller. There is no satisfactory biographical study of Miller. The tangles of his life will require great skill to unravel; he was a furious mystifier and extremely careless with the truth.

10. Frank Norris. Little or no work has been done on Norris's biography, though his importance in the history of American fiction is generally conceded. In the elaborate collected edition there is Charles Caldwell Dobie's important biographical essay (Introduction to Volume VII) and some illuminating remarks by Charles Norris, but no systematic study. The material is scattered through innumerable books and magazines, but one presumes that the most valuable material is in Charles Norris's hands.

11. Bret Harte. Harte's whole life needs to be restudied, but in the meanwhile it might prove interesting to go into the matter of his improvidence and the wails about money matters which deface his letters; his alleged

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drunkenness in the early days of his stay in the East, touched upon in the letters of William Dean Howells; his staying in England when he was severely critical of such men as Henry James and James Russell Lowell for their alleged Anglophilism.

12. David Graham Phillips. Phillips is in a fair way to pass into literary history as the author of *Susan Lennox: Her Fall and Rise*, the first American study of a prostitute. This book has given him a reputation abroad that is not endorsed by his countrymen. A careful study of him would result in a colorful book quite apart from the literary judgment on his work, for his career was gaudy and he came to his death by assassination. Who has possession of his papers? From Phillips the writer might well go into a history of the muckraking period. The material is abundant; many of the actors are still alive; and right now many of the participants are publishing autobiographies.

Addenda. There is always room for short notes on the numerous one-book-authors in American literature. What can be said about W. C. Morrow, author of *The Ape, the Idiot and Other People?* Or of John W. deForrest, author of *Miss Ravenel's Conversion from Secession to Loyalty,* whose work W. D. Howells admired?

If none of these tasks appeals, there is the large field of editing open to writers of scholarly inclinations. There is no comprehensive series of reprints in the field of American letters. Partly this is due to the lack of any serious understanding of what should legitimately find a place in such a series. Most of those which have been undertaken have included standard classics already available in the collected works of various authors or in innumerable school-book editions. This multiplication of volumes is not a particularly praiseworthy activity. Most of the series that have promised well have been discontinued by the publishers for lack of a market. If someone could solve the problem of how to produce reprints in such a fashion that the publishers would not lose money, they would confer a boon on all concerned. Perhaps the solution will be a subsidized collection put out by one of the university presses. Some very fine series have been projected, but since they have failed in mid-career the student does not profit at all. For instance, I have the major part of one series on my shelves and find that the following interesting projected reprints have not appeared and are not likely to appear*:

Magnolia Christi Americana by Cotton Mather.

The Jack Downing Letters.

A New Home, Who'll Follow? by Caroline Kirkland.

Tales and Letters from the West by James Hall.

Peter Cartwright's Autobiography.

Another projected series was to be finely printed, but ended after the publication of one item, Kenneth Murdock's edition of *The Day of Doom*, by Michael Wigglesworth. Some interesting items proposed were a selection from Herman Melville's poetry and selections from Bronson Alcott's Orphic sayings. Without tools the scholar cannot do his work, and without easily available texts literary history is just so much learned lumber.

An excellent tool for workers in American literature is the quarterly journal, *American Literature.* This periodical provides a medium for short studies of particular problems. Without making any invidious distinctions one may cite as of particular interest to the general reader the following articles: "Early Criticism of Emily Dickinson", by Anna Mary Wells; "Ambrose Bierce and the Civil War", by Napier Wilt; and "Mark Twain Juvenilia", by Minnie Brashear. In addition to articles and reviews the journal prints a list of articles on American literature appearing in current periodicals and a

* Also announced in this series and never produced was Timothy Flint's *Recollections.* I am happy to say that I have prepared an edition of this book for the *Americana Deserta* series (Knopf).

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list of research in progress. Both of these features are of immense value.

A knowledge of what is being done will prevent any unnecessary duplication of effort, yet the field is so uncultivated that it is extremely unlikely that any precise duplication will take place. Without attempting to review all that is in progress, mention should surely be made of the work of Stanley T. Williams on Washington Irving, of Thomas Ollive Mabbott on Poe and related figures, of Robert E. Spiller and others on Cooper, of Harry Hayden Clark on Freneau and of Tremaine McDowell on William Cullen Bryant. Equally important is the fact that theses are being written on such minor figures as Kate Chopin, John Howard Payne (whose papers revealed the love passage between Washington Irving and Mary Shelley), Fitz-James O'Brien and F. Marion Crawford. Why not tackle Edgar Saltus (the existing biography is worthless, *Edgar Saltus, The Man* by Marie Saltus) or Frank Stockton?

After all, none of the tasks I have mentioned is anything more than preliminary to the great task, which is the production of a reliable and comprehensive history of American letters. As every schoolboy knows, there are more histories of American literature available than one cares to count, and most of them are pretty poor from any angle, but particularly weak in perspective. Professor F. L. Pattee, echoing H. L. Mencken, who echoed—whom?—has pointed out that we need a radical revision of our fundamental outlines. We do, but it is hard to defeat tradition and no really revolutionary work has thus far appeared. I fear that Professor Pattee's forthcoming comprehensive work won't please all hands. Pattee is diligent, but his critical judgments are erratic, and his ability to err on well-known (as distinguished from debatable or obscure) facts is simply amazing, as one may discover by consulting the notes in his anthology, *Century Readings in American Literature*. He has several times radically revised his judgments, as will appear if one looks at his treatment of Henry James in *American Literature Since 1870* and in *The Development of the American Short Story*. The same goes for his successive treatments of Ambrose Bierce. And of course the letter printed in Walter Neale's *Life of Ambrose Bierce* is a terrible give away. It appears that Pattee tends to follow the drift of popular critical opinion, as if to indicate that he elected authors to a place in his pantheon on the basis of majority vote. Neither will Professor Parrington's three volumes long remain standard, for his judgments of the more purely literary figures are partisan in the extreme. Parrington's work will stand for many years as a major contribution to the history of American thought, but I hardly expect it to stand long as a history of American *literature*. Yet it is only by such efforts as his (and Professor Pattee's) that we will finally arrive at an adequate outline of the development of American letters.

To many workers in the field this is the final objective and a sufficient one. I would take a larger view and keep before the young scholars the ideal of a comprehensive culture history of the United States which would attempt to set before the reader in a series of volumes the complete story of American intellectual life. On such a task many hands will have to coöperate until one powerful mind takes up all the special contributions and wields them into a living whole. Is it too much to imagine that some day America will produce a man capable of drawing together the threads being spun by the literary research workers, the students of American architecture, of the plastic and graphic arts and the historians of philosophy and science? Is it too much to expect that in a happy future the work of Parrington, Mumford, La Follette, Riley and (but where is the historian of American science?) will finally be available in one majestic story, grounded in sociological and economic facts and made luminous by penetrating intelligence?

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TWO SONNETS

by Marie Luhrs

I

Their hair is on the wind, rain on their hair,
Now cool and washed and beautiful they turn
Their faces up. The sun begins to burn
And breathes in swirls of mist to clear the air.
Lightly they live and simply as a mouse;
They drink the stream, gnaw cherries to the bone,
And lay their heads upon a green, soft stone,
But there is no more living in the house.
They have the reputation of the fauns
That hoof the earth, yet think and dream like men,
The reputation of the leprechauns
That move under the spread boughs of the glen.
They are cast out and feared—creatures apart
Who have the shine of rain and sun at heart.

II

Whether they move shadowed by wood or stone
Or in the shadow underneath a tree,
They move together, make no word or tone
Unheeding of another's words or free.
They turn the soil up in their need of bread,
They dance together in their need of play,
They lie in love after the flare of day,
And one by one they crowd the heaped-up dead.
Yet from the hot-limbed contacts of desire,
Or from the breaking of the hard-packed soil,
They have no flame to match each other's fire
And no companionship for all their toil.
Body to body, weary moan with moan—
Each one who crowds the world is there alone.

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HORSE OF ANOTHER COLOR

by Edith Ronald Mirrielees

Not many dramatic revenges are to be chalked up to the credit of animals. The elephant and the parrot and the monkey (exotic creatures, all of them) have a few on their lists, but these are mostly feeble and ill-authenticated. It has remained for the horse, since his recent unhappy reverses, to carry out a revenge which is not feeble, one which future epic poets will sing as past ones sang of Bucephalus and his mighty feats in war.

As all of us know, it is not so very long ago that horses were, over a good part of America, more valuable than their owners. If you interfered with a man, the presumption was that he had given you some cause. You might, in certain regions, even kill him and stand a chance of going free. But if you stole a horse, the case was different. The stolen animal might be the meanest, the most wall-eyed of his kind. None the less, your fate was sure and as swift as the mounts of your pursuers. "Hanging : horse stealing:: pursuers' horses : horse stolen"—it was an equation familiar to those who had never heard of Proportion.

From this superhuman plane the horse crashed down through no fault of his own. He lost his sacrosanctity, he lost his money value, he all but lost his existence. There are not yet, to be sure, many Americans alive who have never seen a horse, but there are literally millions who have never had any first-hand experience with horses—never ridden them, curried them, felt their legs, patted their noses, led them to the proverbial refused drink. The horse as a daily companion has vanished. He has vanished so rapidly that it is easy to conceive of his vanishing altogether, becoming as mythical to the inquiring mind as is the mastodon. Already all genuine, directly acquired knowledge of horses has gone except from a few backwoodsmen and a few children of millionaires—and neither group disseminates its information for the enlightenment of mankind.

But though the horse has departed, he has not departed unobtrusively. Neither perhaps did the mastodon, but concerning its disappearance we have no records. The horse, in going, has done so with a farewell backward kick to set the earth twisting on its axis. At his heels is left confusion, a many-accented Babel, for in his abrupt retreat he has taken with him an important segment of human speech, and much of the power of thought has gone along with it.

Speech and thought have always travelled in the same harness. Whether it is possible to think at all without words remains a babbling point for psychologists; certainly it is not possible to communicate without them save for the things no adult will listen to from another adult in any case. It is possible to express "I am sad" without words. It is possible to express "I am in pain". What is impossible is to interest an audience in these

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unhappy conditions. Only words can provoke that interest. And force of words, power and pungency and exactness of them, depending first upon vivid images in the mind of the speaker, and second upon corresponding images capable of being burnished to brilliancy in the minds of hearers—these are the things the horse has cantered off with.

There was, for instance, a time when "riding for a fall" meant something. The user of the phrase used it exactly. The hearer saw its meaning through visual image even when he did not feel it in his bones. So too with "pulling well in double harness", with "nosing out a victory", with "riding roughshod". Each sprang from first-hand experience or first-hand observation on the part of the user. Each struck back to scores of varied sense impressions in the minds of hearers. "Running neck and neck", for example. It contained not only recollected sight of straining, powerful beasts. In its heyday, when the phrase was really alive, there was also touch and taste, hearing and smell, stout squires trampling in top-boots, jockeys being hoisted up, clamor ('clamour', should it be?), sweat and steam and fragrance of tan-bark. All of that was in the words in their prime. All of that was ready for tapping in the hearer's mind or in the reader's, just as in Shakespeare's day, "set up his rest" swam in the glory of related pleasures.

Now those pleasures are past for the one phrase almost as much as for the other. The connotations coming from them are dead or dying. The whole set of horse-drawn figures has changed overnight from pulsing metaphor to sluggish idiom.

The horse here is, naturally, not standing alone. "Putting in your oar", "trimming your sail"— these too had sap in their syllables for centuries. Paradoxically, images relating to movement have been until recently the most stationary of all images. They have scarcely altered or had need for alteration from the invention of the wheel down to the discovery of steam power. When Sir Robert Peel travelled from Rome to London, he travelled (was it the assiduous M. Maurois who drew attention to the fact?) by the same means Julius Caesar had used over the same route. In all the deliberate centuries between a Caesar and a Peel, almost between a Caesar and an Asquith, metaphors from travel were establishing themselves in the language. Now, within two generations, disestablishment has been accomplished. The phrases remain, the images evoked by them have altered or have vanished.

In the same two centuries an accompanying change has destroyed almost all the pithy figures drawn from country living. Weigh in mind "a wintry smile" against "a sheepish look". The one has in it the bite of the east wind still; the other brings usually no sense impression at all, but only the vague approximation of an emotional state. The canning and desiccating business, so marvellously accelerated by steam, has not been limited to food stuffs. We reach up to our mental shelves for package after package of preserved words which our forebears pulled succulent from their own experiences.

It is true, of course, that in some measure such changes as the present ones are always going on in language. Every idiom was in its day a figurative expression. None the less, when a very large part of speech is altered suddenly, consequences uncalculated by Watt or Edison ensue. When that part is the part containing nearly all means for indirect statement, we arrive, as now, at an era of perplexing poverty in communication.

All users of words, whatever their capacity, have been affected by the change, but imaginative writers are the ones hardest hit. Poets have been hardest hit of all. A poet nowadays finds himself in somewhat the same case as a German bond holder clipping his coupons in 1920. Similes such as those which enriched his fathers are plentiful still, they carry the stamp of past value, but, for his uses, value has somehow been jockeyed out of them.—

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Hair . . .
Crisped like a war-steed's encolure.

It is more than the unfamiliar noun which puts that description out of court.

Or, not to ride a comparison to death, let us leave horses out of the question for a moment.—

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew.

I myself could use that simile with satisfaction if only Shelley had not been before me. You, the reader, perhaps could use it too. An authentic poet probably could not even if Shelley had never done so—not unless glow-worms and dewy dells were part of his dream life based on his sense experience.

When the Romantics discovered the country, they made their discovery because they lived in the country. So did their readers. The nostalgic Scot, reading "To a Daisy" among stretches of London stone, read, none the less, in the terms of boyhood experience. The Englishman turning on his tongue

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,

or

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by
One after one . . .

or

. . . bitter chill it was,
The owl for all his feathers was a-cold,
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass . . .

was reviving impressions, not engaging in the far harder business of struggling to create them. Lines such as those just quoted raised first-hand pictures in the minds of all readers—pictures, moreover, which presently were set in galleries specially consecrated to their use. Their appeal therefore was what the ingenuous Mr. Cohen used to designate as "sure-fire".

They are sure-fire no longer. Our own generation is the first, at least within historic times, in which the early impressions of a majority of both readers and writers have been urban instead of rural. With whatever excursions into carefully preserved wilds, most of us now living lived out our childhoods on paved roads, did our travelling by train or by automobile, knew of the means by which eggs came to breakfast plates or milk to glasses only what we read about them in books. A new Emerson, if another Emerson could happen to America, would have need for a new language: ". . . the stern ethics which sparkle on his chisel-edge, which are measured out by his plumb and foot-rule. . . ." Foot-rule and plumb and chisel-edge—they are irrelevant as dodoes to his apartment-bred listeners. Worse than that, they are irrelevant to himself. The chipping of the chisel has been replaced, even in his own imagination, by the still sterner but somehow less ethical bite of the steam-shovel, by the lunge of the driven piston.

Taking stock of the change, a present-day verse writer may well be found exclaiming, "And oh, the difference to me!" In point of fact, large numbers of them, whether poets or poet-critics, are so exclaiming, though in terms more irritable than Wordsworth's and sometimes less instantly clear. Today's poet is one who has known losses. It is not to be wondered at that both the losses themselves and the bad effects which losses, time out of mind, have had on losers' manners should be conspicuous in contemporary writing. "Modern", when attached to the word "poet", has become almost a synonym for bad-tempered. Frequently it is one for "syntaxless" as well, since bad temper, pushed far enough, passes from objurgation to mere stuttering.

Bad temper and its results are especially likely to prevail where the poet's attention is centered on phenomena peculiar to his own time. Mr. T. S. Eliot, remarkable writer that he is in many respects, can consider present-day manifestations only with the gravest disapproval and in lines scarcely to be

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interpreted without the aid of diagramming. Mr. Yvor Winters, addressing Los Angeles, could fairly be put to the door for his rudeness if it were possible to discover precisely what that rudeness meant. Humanist and anti-humanist, pessimist and ultra-pessimist are alike here, however different elsewhere. The poet owning aloud to an admiration for his own age and its force-driven miracles ceases to be "modern" by virtue of that one admission.

And yet the old is irretrievably gone. Not horses alone, but lambs and cocks and nightingales and mountain daisies and primroses at the river's brim march farther and farther away. In their wake come steam-engines and tractors, miniature golf courses and moving pictures—and all of these the modern poet hates with a whole-hearted aversion. "How much has not kerosene added to the cheerfulness of our evening landscape!" So Lowell exclaims comfortably over the miracle of his own day. "Godless, thin, electric glare" is the kindest word a contemporary has for Mr. Edison's impressive magic.

Persons who are not poets are likely to be surprised by this unappreciative attitude and even peevish at it, as witness a host of comminatory reviewers. Exactly as the people readiest at pointing out stories to the story writer are those whose own writing is confined to monthly bills, so those not poets detect poems in the purr of engines, in the purpled ribbons of oiled roads, and are understandably annoyed when their well-meant contribution elicits no poetic thanks. What they disregard, these over-sanguine non-producers, is that the verse-writer is detecting new poems too. It is his very detection of them that drives him to the height of his cacophonous rage, for there they swim before his brain and he continually tripped up in reaching for them by lack of accompanying figures seasoned to his use.

New metaphors exist, indeed, vivid, exact. They spring up all around—"Step on it!" "Hitting on all eight!"—but they are metaphors still unbroken to the page. Any one of them creates havoc in the verse that harbors it—knocks to pieces the carefully constructed whole and will have attention for itself alone. Their wildness of behavior is not permanent certainly, but its impermanence is small solace to a present poet. Striving vainly to free the lovely verb "to skid" from wrong accents and to bestow upon it right ones, it helps him not at all, either in writing or in resignation, to know that a hundred years from now "his skidding purpose" will ring as sweetly true as did "his galloping pulses" a hundred years ago. He realizes as one not a poet can never wholly realize that always the echoes of a word are more important than the word itself. The echoes of "skid" are, so far, tuned to banter, creaking, mechanical; he can do nothing with it. The very crux of his dilemma is that the whole machine-driven world is crammed with such phrases—phrases still unready, gasoline-flavored—which the luckier man of the year 2000 will set forth to his eternal reputation.

Meanwhile the departed horse may look behind him, content or regretful according to his kind. Not dinosaur nor giant sloth, not Alexander, not Caesar vanished in such turmoil. A horseless world bids fair to be a world without poetry and without philosophy till time at last shall reconcile to a mechanized globe the one irreplaceable equine.

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ON WRITING TRAVEL BOOKS

by Agnes Rothery

TRAVEL books enjoy the doubtful distinction of a separate classification by publisher, bookseller and reader. A travel book is not listed under Fiction or Belles Lettres, although certain ones might properly be placed under one or the other. It is not recognized as Science or History, although again it might occasionally be eligible to these divisions. Biography and Art refuse to claim it and—hardest blow of all—so does Literature. For this uncomplimentary implication the authors of travel books have only themselves to thank.

The old-fashioned travel books were, with a few notable exceptions, merely verbose guides, lacking even the guide-book's fund of practical information. Unless you happened to have a special reason for finding out something about the countries treated by them it never occurred to you to open their covers. Most of the archaic tomes concerning unknown lands have been gathering dust for years upon forgotten shelves and deserve the oblivion into which they have fallen.

When these tedious recitals passed out of fashion a new type was launched upon the market. These were the facetious adventures of the man who set forth upon his journeyings accompanied by a wife and a dog. A large proportion of the recital was devoted to the difficulties of finding the dog, feeding the dog, getting the dog in and out of hotels where no dogs were allowed. Or the writer chose as his vehicle of conveyance a second-hand automobile which could be depended upon to collapse at all crucial moments, thereby furnishing comic relief. Having assembled these elements of humor, the book proceeded on the principle that everything that happens on unfamiliar territory is screamingly funny. Foreign food and foreign customs—anything that was not precisely like its counterpart at home—were simply jokes. These books lacked the few virtues of their forerunners, for they were not even dignified. Incidentally they sometimes caused definitely disagreeable feeling toward America and Americans in the lands which they ridiculed.

Today the travel book is enjoying the most agreeable phase in its evolution. We are richly showered with thoroughly delightful books written in a thoroughly delightful way about generally interesting parts of the world. Today is the heyday for the travel writer.

What makes the ideal travel book? It is comparatively easy to analyze the elements of its success. The ideal travel book does two things. First of all it re-creates for the reader an impression of a place: it catches that elusive thing called atmosphere: it stirs in his heart the same emotions which were stirred in the heart of the traveller himself: it quickens his imagination and warms his sympathy. It is, in a measure, an experience for him, not merely a book, as the journey was an experience to the writer, not merely territory covered. The second thing it does is

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to impart carefully assorted information which is both accurate and of interest to the reader. It does not try to impress the reader with the author's erudition: it tells the reader the things he wants to know.

Since different people want to know different things, different types of books are frankly produced to meet their demands. Thus Clara E. Laughlin's *So You're Going to Paris!* is primarily for the tourist who wants reliable information about prices, routes, trains and shops, while George Slocomb's *Paris in Profile* is primarily for the reader who already knows his Paris, but enjoys sauntering through it once again arm in arm with a sophisticated and agreeable companion. There is a difference in the proportion of space devoted to actual facts in these two books, but it is noticeable that both of them are scrupulously accurate. For today we demand truthfulness in all travel books, whether they are of the purely objective type or whether they incline toward the subjective. The books of the perfervid writer who piles Ossa on Pelion —or the Taj Mahal on Popocatepetl—in order to aggrandize his personal achivement belong under the head of Adventure or Autobiography. They cannot be listed under our modern exacting definition of Travel.

There are, of course, certain classics in the field of fantasy which elude imitation and laugh at criticism. Our libraries would be poorer without Baron Münchausen, Marco Polo, and Ossendowski. But these bright flashes from the fire of genius are not in the sober category we are considering. The writer of travel books today must, if he would secure a reputable publisher and hold his clientele of readers, be as accurate in his facts and figures as is humanly possible. Information, lots of it, and well checked up with each new edition, is practically the only ingredient in those old standbys of Charles A. Stoddard, Burton Holmes and F. G. Carpenter, which still continue to make money for their writers and which still number thousands of contented readers.

But while truthfulness is still an essential it is not today sufficient by itself. Since we are living in an age when everything, from driving an automobile to absorbing an education, must be as effortless as possible, the information in travel books must not only be selected for the type of reader for whom the book is primarily intended, but this information must be presented in as painless a manner as practicable. If your travel book isn't readable it is like the apple pie that isn't palatable. It may be genuine and it may be nutritious, but if it is tasteless it will not find consumers.

To be accurate, then, and to be readable are necessities for any travel book today. You will find that the simplest ones, from Frank Schoonmaker's "Come with Me" series to the more unconventional wanderings of Norman Douglas, are built upon these foundations as a matter of course.

But while the ideal travel book incorporates these features, it comprises something more. It is this "something more" which brings us to that part of our analysis which slips out from any rule of thumb. It is the personality of the writer. Without this permeating quality, which seeps through every line of every page, no travel book can approach that high level which lifts it from the stereotyped ranks to become a work of art—perhaps a classic. "We borrow the light of an observant and imaginative traveller and see the foreign land bright with his aura: and we think it is the country which shines", is the supreme definition by one who was a master of style.

What is this personality and how is it expressed? Despite the advertisements which guarantee not only to explain it to us but to endow us with it if we will only sign and mail the enclosed coupon, most of us are considerably puzzled by the question. But we do know one thing. Personality is not synonymous with egotism: it is utterly incompatible with it. This does not mean that the author may not be an egotist. He probably is. But like the woman who knows how to be fas-

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cinating he is careful to conceal the fact. It is not a matter of morals but of manners. Being personal is not expressing one's personality.

All of the greatest travel books are vibrant with the personality of the writer, but it is hard to recall one which is personal in the trivial sense of the word. To be sure, many of them are written in the first person, but this is merely a literary device. They do not deal with the individual's experiences as such, but they deal, through the writer, with fundamental experiences which are more profound than those of any single being. C. M. Doughty in his immortal *Travels in Arabia Deserta* joins a caravan, but it is the life of the caravan and not the life of Doughty which gives the book its enduring value. Probably the greatest subjective travel book ever written is *The Sea and the Jungle* by H. M. Tomlinson. But while this is written from Tomlinson's very soul and refined by his labor and his love, it reveals no more of his private life than *King Lear* reveals of Shakespeare's. This abstention from cheap familiarity and personal revelation is tremendously effective. The magnificent saga of the Amazon is delineated for us through the medium of a poetic spirit. At the end of the book we know practically nothing about Tomlinson but we know Tomlinson.

A rather interesting attempt at the subjective travel book appeared last year in *Hot Countries* by Alec Waugh. Mr. Waugh very evidently set himself to write not a description of certain countries but his reactions to those countries. It was to be polished, urbane, cosmopolitan, with occasional threads of humor and reflected philosophy. And it was all those things. But it was not a success as a travel book, and it was not a success as a subjective experiment.

But W. H. Hudson frequently, as in his notable *The Purple Land*, wrote in the imaginative first person, and the intense quietness, the melancholy, the aspiration, the sensitiveness of the real man are borne in upon the reader more and more profoundly with every page. If a writer has personality he need not be afraid that it will be hidden. It cannot be hidden any more than Melville could conceal himself behind the mighty bulk of *Moby Dick*. That book is heroic not because of the white whale, but because of Melville's heroic calibre.

Supreme geniuses in any field are rare. But because one cannot write a *Sea and the Jungle* is no reason why he should deny himself that most delightful of careers, which consists of travelling in far countries and then writing about them, particularly if he will remember that it is more pleasing to the reader to learn about the far countries than to learn about the author—unless the author happens to be a unique and striking figure like Sir Richard Burton, or an irresistibly charming one like Robert Louis Stevenson.

We are fortunate today in the countless examples of successful travel books. The best of the old ones like E. G. Squier's *Peru,* Charles Kingsley's *At Last,* Lafcadio Hearn's *Two Years in the French West Indies,* and A. W. Kinglake's *Eöthen,* are as good now as when they were written. And their ranks are constantly supplemented by worthy recruits. Ever since E. V. Lucas began to "wander" other chatty and cultivated people have been wandering also in various sections of the globe and bringing home from their gleanings very acceptable sheaves. And ever since the deservedly popular Harry A. Franck began to "tramp" and "vagabond" and "roam", others have done likewise, singly and in couples. And why not, since the world is larger than any one person can comfortably compass, and since most of the books which were written twenty years ago were written about a world which has vanished? To be sure, our rapid methods of transportation are pushing the frontiers farther and farther away. It is harder to find undiscovered nooks and corners than it used to be. But the enterprising traveller will somehow unearth them and the writer who has any

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originality will invest them with fresh meaning. Sometimes instead of wandering far one may burrow deep with equally satisfactory results. A cranny, a county or an island may be reinterpreted by a single phase of its development. In fact, this intensification and simplification of the travel book have given us some of our most fascinating modern volumes. Books like *Bird Islands of Peru, The Châteaux of France, Excavations in North Africa,* and *In the Footprints of Charles Lamb* are all admirable variants. In the modern travel book it is not necessarily a defect to be superficial. There are plenty of intelligent people who prefer skimming through many readable pages of predigested information to ploughing through a fewer number of pages of solid and minute observation. But the writer of the superficial travel book will do well to be wary of attempting criticism on institutions and temperaments which are obviously beyond his scope. Only the sincere student of these matters has any business to criticize them. In other words, if a writer cannot offer intelligent criticism he had best eliminate discussion of the morals of the Latins, the cruelty of the Turks and the imperialism of Great Britain.

To sum up, then, the ideal travel book is one which is truthful, readable and sparkling with the personality of the author. The first two virtues may be acquired by almost anyone who is an observant traveller and an ordinarily good journeyman of letters. The last, which is the most important—for without it neither permanence nor distinction are possible—is the most difficult to acquire. It is doubtful if it can be acquired, either in letters or in life, despite the cheering assurance of certain schools of journalism. But lack of it may be reduced to polite inconspicuousness. Good manners suggest the advisability of writing your travel book about the places visited, not about yourself. If you have personality it will permeate every page, whether you realize it or not. If you haven't personality you cannot manufacture it out of a recital of egotistical episodes. Good manners are your only salvation.

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GEORGE SARGENT: 1867–1931

by Karl Schriftgiesser

His tall gaunt form was familiar to many people. His name was known in the book markets of the world. His weekly column in the Boston *Evening Transcript* and his monthly "Book Mart" in THE BOOKMAN were read wherever books were collected. Personally he was one of those rare men who can one moment smack their lips over the taste of the world in the raw and the next moment retire into the scholar's cloister to lose themselves in the antiquities of letters. The good things of the world, the rich things, he loved well: the bouquet of wine, the roar of cities, association with men. The other good things of the world, the simple things, were his delight, too: mist on the hills at dawn, the peace of the valley, work on the farm, the rustic quiet of a New Hampshire homestead. But there were two things, I believe, which he loved above all else. One was tangible: books; the other was intangible: news. And around both of these was wound his life.

Primarily George Sargent was a newspaper man. He never forgot this nor would he allow his friends to forget it. It was paramount in his life. In his later years, retired to his New Hampshire homestead far from the city rooms in which his earlier days had been spent, his interest lay in the places where things were happening. He pierced beyond the boundaries of his farm by letter for news of the book markets and the auction rooms; over the radio he daily picked up those flashes of life and death which once made up the daily grind of his own existence. Fields of snow and country roads might cut him off from the motive power that could bring him back to the city, but what was going on there he made it his business to know. I think that it was his insistence upon never retiring from the daily press that made him so successful through the twenty-six years which he devoted to chronicling the goings-on in that peculiar world where a book assumes importance because of its edition.

It was in that world that George Sargent was best known. Once a group of collectors were gathered together and, like all specialized groups, they soon began talking shop. When George D. Smith remarked that George Sargent had done more than any other man to popularize collecting none of the others dissented. Every Wednesday since 1903 he had written two or more columns of news and comment under the heading "The Bibliographer" for the *Transcript*; once a month he had written on the same topic for THE BOOKMAN; the files of almost any publication devoted to book collecting contain work of his typewriter. I think I can best express his ability to make such writing both effective and interesting by telling an otherwise pointless anecdote. One day we were sitting in the comfortable living room of his home. I had been looking

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at some of his own treasures: his slight but relevant collection of Napoleonana, his page from the Gutenberg Bible, and, best of all, his inexhaustible supply of rare-book catalogues from every book shop in the world. Knowing my interest in books he asked me if I ever collected any author. I told him that I had (to the best of my knowledge) the finest collection of first editions of Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford that any young man had ever made. Neither name meant, then, anything to him. I told him that I had spoken of this rather harmless hobby to another collector who had sniffed at my taste. "Taste? What does he know of taste?" said Mr. Sargent. "If those two fellows appeal to you, collect them. That's the only real excuse for collecting, anyway. Aimless gathering of books means nothing. Gathering of books for a purpose does. You have something no one else has. It means something to you. Go to it." I am afraid I have failed to get into this little story the sympathy and the live interest he expressed.

But it was sympathy that made him so well known among all classes of collectors. He knew how to treat the collector who made the Huntington library famous. He knew how to treat my slight shelf of personal treasures. In a certain respect he transmitted that same sympathy to his writing. I am sure that no one has been a better champion of the small collector than George Sargent. He was continually writing that to be a collector you did not have first to be a millionaire. His journalistic treatment of the collecting of books and A. Edward Newton's essays on this subject together brought the desire for a select library to many a person who otherwise would have spent money without getting anywhere. He helped make people conscious of the values of types (although he was, perhaps, less insistent upon this phase than some others), of the points of famous first editions, of the prices that were paid for them, of the out of the way corners where the treasures lay. And he was as sympathetic toward the "modern" first editions as he was to the treasures of antiquity. And he could be just as excoriating in his comment if too fabulous sums were paid for an extremely rare book as he could be over the inexcusable kiting of prices of the books of living authors. The Yankee in him made him cautious about the prices some books fetched. He was as keen on prices as he was on the contents of books, and yet he was a much wider reader than many men who have had far greater fortunes than his to spend on filling library shelves.

George Sargent was born sixty-four years ago in Warner, N. H., a small town near Concord. He died early this winter on the same farm where he was born, in an old, red, New England farmhouse on the top of Tory Hill. His first ancestor in this country was William Sargent, who had settled in Ipswich, Massachusetts, in 1630. George Sargent's schooling (I was about to say education, but that would not be true) was received in the Warner Free School, from which he planned to go to college, probably Harvard. But the admonition of Horace Greeley changed his mind. Instead of Cambridge, then, it was in the Northwest that his active education began, for at St. Paul, Minnesota, he began work as a cub reporter for the *Pioneer Press*. I have heard him tell many strange tales of newspaper life out there. He declared that when he was city editor he always kept a loaded revolver in the flat drawer of his desk. Once, anyway, he had to use this gun to quell an irate subscriber. What it was that brought him back to the East I do not know, but soon after his return to Boston he found work in the *Transcript* office, quite the antithesis to his rough and tumble western news room and a place where revolvers were entirely unknown. This was in 1895.

For eight or nine years he worked as a reporter. Men who knew him in those days say he was one of the best in a city noted

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for its able newspaper men. He was a gay, free spirit then. He knew, as they say, his way around town. He was quite as much at home in the Parker House bar (that grand old basement gathering place where the liveliest minds of the town were wont to meet), as he was taking notes in the home of a Brahmin on the hill. More than once the varied associations with men in all walks brought him news that the other papers failed to get. Stories are still told around Newspaper Row (or what's left of it these dry days) about him: of how, without his moving away from School Street, Boston, he printed in Boston an exclusive account of a notable railroad merger which took place in New York. There are others, too. But all the time that Sargent was at work as a reporter he was interested in books. In 1903 he commenced in the literary pages of the *Transcript*, then as now ably edited by Edwin Francis Edgett, a weekly column devoted to rare books. This appeared, unsigned, under the title "The Bibliographer", without cessation up to the day of his death. In fact the last column he wrote appeared in the same issue of the *Transcript* as that which carried his obituary.

"The Bibliographer" was primarily a news column. In it were caught all the items of general interest gleaned from a thousand carefully built up contacts with every auction room and rare-book dealer in America and London. The column was lively, accurate, readable. It was the forerunner of such departments as are now in the literary sections of most newspapers. It was a record in concise form obtainable nowhere else of the activities of a specialized world. Mr. Sargent had correspondents almost anywhere there was a rare-book market and through these correspondents he was able to present the international aspects of bibliography. Mr. Sargent paid particular attention to rarities, but he was not averse to commenting boldly upon modern limited editions, books valuable for the type in which they were set, books noted for title-pages, and all the other little things which make collecting so much fun. Newton, Rosenbach, George Smith, Henry Huntington, Frederick Hopkins, Herschell Jones, William Loring Andrews, Beverly Chew were but a few men of importance in this "game" who knew the value of Sargent's pioneering column. Some years after its start *The Publisher's Weekly* paid it the tribute of being the most widely quoted authority on bibliography in America. Week by week it recorded prices, described rare items, commented upon this book or that manuscript, told of the ups and down of the market, explained in short paragraphs the odd and unusual books that are forever coming to light in the musty bookshops, the dingy attics, the forgotten trunks of the world. Sargent achieved the same result once each month in the back of THE BOOKMAN. I have heard it said by good authority that no other writer on the subject did more than Sargent to bring the librarian, the dealer, the collector and the auctioneer into close relationship. For through these weekly and monthly columns always ran a love for books that was stronger than a respect for the money they represented; through them ran a broad sympathy for the old and the new; through them ran dominant an insistence that the collecting of books is the sport not alone of the wealthy man but of anyone with the desire. Frederick Hopkins has said that this did as much as any one thing to broaden and popularize the love of books.

A singular modesty marked the anonymity of "The Bibliographer". As I have said, Sargent's name never appeared in the column, which was always most impersonally written. But he wrote many signed articles as well. He contributed to THE BOOKMAN and to practically all the specialized publications for the collector. I believe that hardly a private library of importance has escaped his description in the *Transcript* or elsewhere. He wrote special articles on the outstanding events of the world of rare books,

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features that attracted wide attention and were reprinted widely. Each year when the big auctions were taking place in New York Sargent would be there to "cover" them, sending each night an account of the attractions to be published in the news columns of his paper.

Sargent was a tall man, gaunt, angular. He smoked a large pipe almost incessantly. He talked with the nasal accent of a northern New Englander. He was unaffected, abrupt, and very much the countryman. He wore loose-fitting clothes and was in appearance not at all the type of man associated in the popular mind with the dilettantism of collecting. In 1914 an attack of pleurisy forced him to leave the city and he went back to his farm in Warner. In a beautiful New England setting, this farm sat on the top of a hill which, like most New England hills, had a legend. It was called Tory Hill, and Sargent delighted in being called the Squire of Tory Hill. Every room in the house was filled with books. They lined the walls, they were piled on the floors, and the steep staircase leading from the front hall was used on two sides as another bookcase. For many years Sargent worked his farm, actually making it pay. He owned a horse and kept cows and his gardens were his pride. Up to within a short time of his death he kept a buggy, and when he went to town drove there slowly behind his horse like any farmer. His first concession to a more modern way of living was the installation of the radio in order that he might have the news flashes from the Boston newspapers regularly. At the farm he entertained many bookish visitors. Once each year he held his annual "literary weekend", to be a guest at which was considered an honor. Collectors visited him. His correspondence grew. His mail was each day packed with news from all over the world. His collection of catalogues was, I am sure, without many equals. In a community where reading is not held in too great esteem, among friends more interested in crops and politics than books, he lived and made his century-old house a center of book-news broadcasting. When he left the farm it was to go to the book centers, to New York, Boston, Philadelphia. Annually he lectured at Yale on bibliography. Often he would journey to Concord, where he stayed at the Eagle Hotel, made famous in the stories of Winston Churchill. Here he would talk far far into the night with the New Hampshire politicians. This was one of his side interests, and he used to boast that he was one of the best lobbyists in the State. Even in his rustic existence he remained a cosmopolitan in his tastes. Member of distinguished American and English bibliographical societies though he was, he could sit up all night and talk tax rates with a farmer-legislator. Friend of presidents and millionaires though he was, I have listened to him in a Boston speakeasy hold an audience from their cups with his tales of the west and of his newspaper days.

Sargent was the author of several books. Three were written during his newspaper activities; the rest he wrote at Elm Farm. The first was the outcome of a hobby. He was an intense admirer of Napoleon, and he owned a small collection of Napoleonana. Out of this came his first published book, which marked, in a way, the beginnings of his interest in bibliography, *Napoleon and the French Revolution in Literature*. This was followed by a collection of bookish essays and a history of his native town. Other books which came at unequal intervals were *The Engraved Works of A. N. Macdonald*, 1922; *Lauriat's: A Sketch of Early Boston Bookselling*, 1922; *Modern Tendencies in Book Collecting*, 1925; *Amy Lowell: A Mosaic*, 1926 (written from personal knowledge of the Brookline poet with whom he was on quite friendly terms); *A. Edward Newton: A Bibliography*, 1927 (his best-known work, the limited edition of which sold out before publication); and *A Busted*

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Bibliophile and his Books, 1929. He had collaborated with Joseph Jackson on a book devoted to some English travels of the latter, and he had compiled a collection of the aphorisms of Oscar Wilde.

Perhaps if George Sargent had not been so good a newspaper man he might have written better and more important books. But he was faithful to his trust, which was to be the chronicler of books and not the writer of them. I may not have made it clear, but it is my opinion and the opinion of others far better fitted to express it than I, that George Sargent spent the better part of his lifetime in bringing people closer to books. For this alone he deserves recognition. Life was not kind to Sargent in many ways; a warm and genial man, he was forced by his health to retire from active newspaper work long before he wanted to; furthermore, he was handicapped by an imperfect adjustment to practical affairs and the normal routine of business. But on the whole his love and interest in books, his desire to spread that love everywhere, overcame all else. He was a bibliophile and as such he was respected and honored. A "busted bibliophile", so he said in the last year of his life, but in that title to his last book is a bit of sardonic humor that was typical of Sargent. He may not have attained Olympian heights on Tory Hill but he made life a lot pleasanter by spreading knowledge of those who did to others who, like himself, stayed in the valley.

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A MONTH OF THE THEATRE

WANTED: THEMES FOR AMBITIOUS AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS

by Francis Fergusson

THE current season has shown a number of light and amusing comedies, sketches of contemporary life flimsily built around some slight situation or facile conception of character. Usually these comedies have several good actors, who make their success and justify their existence. The actor and director depend upon the author for their framework or story; and in plays like *The Vinegar Tree* and *The Greeks Had a Word for It*, the author does not take his responsibilities too seriously. He lays his scene in the here and now, invents a few situations, and lets the actors alone to fill his outline with flesh and blood. *The Vinegar Tree* is about the amorous complications you get when you mix an aging and peevishly-married couple, their daughter and her very young admirer, and two technically perfect, experienced Bohemian free-lovers. Mary Boland does more than her share, as the aging wife, to bring this confection to life; and H. Reeves Smith is almost as good as her resigned and grouchy husband. Any excuse is sufficient to enable them to get their neat satire on the stage. *The Greeks Had a Word for It* belongs to the same species. It is a tale of three high-class New York courtesans, for which the Greek word, I am told, was *hetairae*. We watch them capturing their victims: a Russian pianist, a wealthy son; and then getting rid of one protector after another until at last they form a happy little *société à trois*. The courtesans are amusing enough as played by Muriel Kirkland, Verree Teasdale and Dorothy Hall, but the best performance is that of Ernest Glendinning, as the Russian pianist. Anyone who has known any Slav performers will grant Mr. Glendinning almost uncanny skill, in make-up, in accent—above all, in his epitome of a certain kind of brutal artist's vanity.

George Kelly's new play, *Philip Goes Forth*, might have laid claim to many of the virtues of *The Vinegar Tree* and *The Greeks Had a Word for It*, but it is less pure in its genre: it takes itself more seriously than it deserves. Philip, the son of a comfortable Philadelphia family, is impelled to go forth and try to write plays. We see him in a very authentic Philadelphia interior, and then in an authentic Bohemian boarding house, where he decides he is a better business man than playwright, and makes up his mind to go back to his father's firm. Mr. Kelly is too good a reporter not to provide his actors with good opportunities for character studies. Philip himself was well played by Harry Ellerbe, though with a little too much charming innocence for my taste. Cora Witherspoon made a delightful caricature of a meddlesome female. Dorothy Stickney gave a really subtle and penetrating study of an eccentric poetess, one of Philip's fellow-lodgers—but it suddenly developed that she was supposed to be a great genius. At that

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point her character lost all credibility, and Mr. Kelly's light comedy turned out to have some sort of deadly serious intent.

It seems that Mr. Kelly intended to write about a solemn, almost a religious "going forth", and that the only quest he could think of was that of a young playwright. It seems that he craves to burst into song, but that all he could dare to do was to give his eccentric poetess a purple passage in the third act. In trying to find a contemporary theme, he had to pretend that play-making is a business of very serious import, and he had to assume that it matters to anybody what becomes of young men like Philip. I should say that Mr. Kelly, with his talent, his skill and his experience, and with an ambition which disdains the thin artificiality of Broadway comedy, was in the unheroic dilemma of being all dressed up and no place to go.

Two Continental Comedies

Mr. Jed Harris, with Gogol's *Inspector General*, and Mr. Bela Blau with Schnitzler's *Anatol*, reminded us that the real thing was being written not so long ago. Since these plays appeared among us, however briefly, there seems to be an excuse for comparing them with our native product. I should say that the American writers started with an idea, and then looked around for a way to realize it in the people they knew, while Gogol and Schnitzler were putting down what they saw. Theme, characters and story seem to have been given them in one complex and immediate vision, which they did not so much invent as perceive anew. There is a kind of traditional and impersonal necessity about Anatol, the Viennese lover, or about Gogol's provincial bureaucracy; but the young men, the fathers, the flappers, the married and the unmarried of the American plays are thin, mental and arbitrary, like the people in automobile advertisements. Unfortunately for our stage, we cannot capture in production the richness and necessity of these foreign plays: the acting of Broadway farce will often bring the vital juices which the author could not provide, while our actors in foreign classics are likely to be dry and uninspired.

The Inspector General was a noble effort. Mr. Harris assembled a very good cast; and I had the impression that Eugene Powers, Lina Abarbanell, Romney Brent and Edward Bromberg were not only the best actors available, but that they enjoyed the play and had spent loving care on their rôles—and I saw it on the dreary second night, when the meagre audience came armed with the unfavorable reviews in the daily papers. There is a belief in New York that caricature like that of Gogol is childish. The newspaper reviewers are more at home with wisecracks. They do not see that the humor of a great comedy lies in the eccentric view of humanity which it embodies, so that all its personages are distorted from real people, but consistent with the satirist's fundamental vision; and that humor of this kind is utterly unlike the wit of word and situation. This play, which belongs in one of the departments of the Molière tradition, is so triumphantly theatrical that a good actor cannot resist it; but to make its exaggerations and its strict style comprehensible a cast trained in the same way and drilled by a very good director would be necessary.

This is true of *Anatol* also, but *Anatol* is easier because its style is more naturalistic. Anatol moves in a world of his own, but it —Schnitzler's world—is nearer the real world than Gogol's, and Schnitzler has many witty lines and familiar situations. The acting was much nearer the spirit of the original, especially that of Walter Connolly as Anatol's companion, Max, and of Patricia Collinge as the lady whom Anatol fails to seduce. Dennie Moore and Miriam Hopkins, as two of his mistresses, were very deft and charming, but they had different notions of the style of the play. Joseph Schildkraut, who played Anatol, was easy and "Viennese" enough, but he was monotonous, and he made no

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attempt to study the psychology of a boyish libertine.

Both of these plays had the advantage of very respectable direction, and the fact that in both cases the style was sloppy goes to show how difficult it is to achieve any sort of unity of tone with actors of very diverse background. One of the functions of a director is to make sure that all the actors are in the same play; but that he can hardly be expected to do with a cast recruited for a few weeks' rehearsals.

Two Ambitious American Plays

William Bolitho's posthumous *Overture* and Philip Barry's new play, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, are more ambitious even than Mr. Kelly, and try for drama of high seriousness. Both of them are very interesting from the rather technical angle with which I am concerned in these notes: the question of what the author depends on for his structure, if the actor depends on him. We find Mr. Barry with what I believe to be a very sound instinct trying to derive from the Bible, and Bolitho attempting to construct a legend all by himself: a fresh, new Yankee bird's-eye maple suite of a play, with a disillusioned humanitarian varnish.

Audiences vastly prefer *Tomorrow and Tomorrow*; and I think one may say that *Overture* is a failure in almost every respect. The story is that of a young German of good family, Ritter, who helps to make a revolution in a small German city after the war. The government troops surround the revolutionists as soon as the latter seize the *Rathaus*; and to prevent their shelling the town Ritter gives himself up to be shot. He is abandoned by the girl he loves and by his hard associates, who escape to make another revolution elsewhere. It was fairly evident that Bolitho had been interested neither in Germany nor in revolution—nor even in the love affair, for the girl seems to be a perfunctory concession to the popular manner. Hence the Germans are neither convincing nor significant; the revolution is incredible, and nothing is at stake. The actors, being Americans, and Mr. Colin Clive, a competent and unobtrusive Englishman, were no more interested in Germans or revolutionists than Bolitho, and so could not perform the same service for him that Broadway actors perform for Broadway playwrights.

This leaves the idealist; but an idealist whose main line of action is meaningless, and whom neither the actor nor the author ever suspected of being a live human being, is pretty thin material for a play. Bolitho had that bane of American letters, a good idea; he had sincerity and his own bewildered idealism—but nothing whatever to write about.

Mr. Barry, on the other hand, took the story of Elisha's visits to the Shunammite woman; and a great and beautiful story it is, as I found by looking it up in II Kings, Chapter IV. The prophet Elisha is recognized, taken in and lodged by a great Shunammite woman. She longs for a child, and Elisha, through prayer, enables her to bear her husband a son. The son dies, and Elisha, through prayer, restores him to life. Then he departs.

I remarked that I thought Mr. Barry's instinct sound in looking for an ancient story to put on the stage. "The older the story the better," says Gower, in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*; "I tell you what mine authors say." Mr. Anderson had the same idea when he dramatized the story of Elizabeth and Essex. But Mr. Anderson managed to make that very incident interesting to a modern audience, while Mr. Barry, to acclimatize his legend, tries to find an equivalent for it in Redmanton, Indiana. The great Shunammite woman becomes Eve Redman, the discontented wife of a boyish young Babbitt; the prophet becomes Nicholas Hay, a psychiatrist who comes to town to lecture at the local university. Nicholas gives Eve a son according to the familiar processes of reproduction, and without resorting to

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prayer. Eight or nine years later the son falls ill, and Nicholas comes hurrying from Chicago, and brings him to life with some sort of ill-defined psycho-analytic hocus-pocus. Having established this essentially unprayerful love affair, it is difficult to have the prophet leave—but leave he does, for no sufficient reason, carrying with him the romantic memory of the flowers Eve likes best, by way of prophetic corrective to his belief in endocrines; and relinquishing Eve and their son to a quiet life with the unsuspecting husband.

It is a convincing proof of Mr. Barry's skill and sincerity, and also of the mysterious power of a theme which an author illustrates but does not invent, that this curious play is acceptable, and even occasionally absorbing. The acting (which takes Mr. Barry as seriously as Mr. Barry takes the Bible narrative) is so good that the incredibility of the characters is hardly noticeable until one thinks it over during the intermissions and on the way home. One then sees that no great woman would educate her child by telling him where the trout lie and how to pick gooseberries; nor resign herself to a life with an amiable dumb-bell when a great husband and father was hers for the asking. I think Mr. Barry, who has grown very much since *Paris Bound*, is still too fond of young American married people to see how they differ from the founders of a nation, and still too anxiously committed to a vindication of his own time and place to see that even a very good psycho-analyst is a different order of being from a great prophet.

But though Mr. Barry was responsible for some absurdities in putting Elisha in Indiana, he proved a godsend to the actors, and the actors chosen by Mr. Miller were a godsend to him. Mr. Herbert Marshall, who played Nicholas Hay, portrayed, if not a prophet, certainly a man absorbed in some real work. All the time he was on the stage one felt his being focused on a distant objective; and when his relation to Eve depended on himself and not on Mr. Barry, he managed to make one feel that he loved her for herself and her own good. This made the romantic sadness of his parting, and some of the opinions Mr. Barry gave him, all the more painful: but enough remained to carry the play. Osgood Perkins, as Hay's secretary and friend, pointed his witty lines with great neatness, and John T. Doyle as the family doctor was richly and wisely inefficient. Mr. Harvey Stephens, as Eve's unseeing husband, gave a first-rate portrait of a well-to-do young business man, agreeing exactly with the author's writing of the rôle. Even the maids and the stage child were good. Only Miss Zita Johann, as Eve, was disappointing. The part is very difficult, and as I have said, inconsistent, and Miss Johann was rather too self-satisfied.

It is encouraging to find very intelligent playwrights like Mr. Barry and Mr. Anderson seeing the drama in themes which they did not invent, and even more encouraging to see that audiences respond to their plays and to *The Green Pastures*. But it is regrettable that none of them seems to be able to utilize the work of a Joyce, an Eliot or a Pound—writers who have really worked out some sort of relation to the great past. But these men are almost as different from Mr. Barry as Elisha is from Nicholas Hay.

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FICTION

A NIGHT IN KURDISTAN *by Jean-Richard Bloch* (SIMON & SCHUSTER. $2.50)

IF, as "noted critics" inform us, Jean-Richard Bloch is "the peer of the finest novelists of this generation", "a continental author of premier ranking", his latest masterpiece, *A Night in Kurdistan*, may fairly be taken as a straw suggestive of the drift of contemporary European literature. It should be of interest to examine the elements of this novel, first published in France and England in 1929, which "completely bewitched"—as one critic says—the reviewers of two nations. Anyone addicted to a taste for oriental gorgeousness, for fire and force, for passionate sensuousness, must accord M. Bloch high praise. And anyone who likes a good "yarn" will testify that his interest is excited by the unintentionally comical exploits of the melodramatic hero, who goes about splitting heads, throwing javelins down men's throats, burning people, tenderly biting women to death, and otherwise diverting himself.

M. Bloch aspires, however, to much more than style and suspense, which are essentially incidental to the fundamental elements of his novel. Precisely what are these elements? Have they a true freshness rooted in a wisdom which age cannot wither, or are they worm-eaten cadavers, rattling by in a feverish masquerade? Has not the author galvanized into unnatural life such romantic remains as the Nietzschean Superman, an emotional and Byronic revolt from reason and society, a Hardy-like sub-rational fatalism, and a Shelleyan nostalgia for fabulous feminine loveliness and a naturalistic uniqueness? The unsavory character of these "remains" may be shrouded from the casual reader by M. Bloch's use of the latest fog of decadent interest in mental chaos, in the shadowy beings which dwell in the dark hinterlands of the human consciousness. Conceiving man as an "edifice of darkness, . . . a maze of subterranean canals . . . over which proud reason reigns no more", the author concerns himself largely with "those caverns where, bending double, consciousness deciphers, by the light of the Sibylline fire, the designs made by the thick, oily waters of the deepest cisterns". He is devoted to "that long continuous dream which is, properly speaking, life, . . . buried beneath the vault of clear thought thrown over it by consciousness". Thus we are presented with a hero "saying one thing with his lips, while thinking another with his mind, and dreaming a third without knowing it". Saad is of those "who have no other gods save their feelings", who scorn "the little demons of logic"; his story is fittingly entitled an "epic of the Continent of Passion". This Asiatic continent, however, turns out to be merely a romantic *pays des chimères*, since M. Bloch admits "I had never in my life given a thought to either Kurds or Anatolian Greeks. I had never travelled in these regions". Verisimilitude is beneath the concern of this confessed disciple of Anatole France, Daudet, Alfred de Musset, Stendhal, Maupassant, Rabelais, Rimbaud, Gauguin, and Stevenson; he proclaims that in this novel "there is no question of exactitude, or local color, or faithfully observed manners and customs. It is a voyage merely of a soul cut off from its roots, that has fared forth, beyond space and time, to seek and come upon its fellows". This conventionally romantic nostalgia is partly Nietzschean and partly Shel-

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leyan, involving the Mussulman Saad in the massacre of the Christian city of Kasir and in the quest for Evanthia, his "race-sister", the conventional phantom of desire. Through the tale, which includes Saad's rescue of Evanthia from his ravishing kinsmen and his final return to her in disguise, blows the capricious wind—odorous of Egdon Heath—of "a sardonic fate", of "chance, which rules us all".

The underlying philosophic assumptions of the book are voiced by the Sufi, the Holy Man, who effects Saad's spiritual regeneration by instructing him, when he had left his wife for religious meditation, that "there have only been the three major species" of men, wolves, dogs, and lions, and that he, Saad, is a "lion-man", emancipated from any "common law or any guiding principle". Thus the "pitiless conqueror" must fare forth, Alastor-like, in quest of Evanthia, the lion-man's race-sister, whose image had appeared to him as the "unique one". He does not set out, however, before the slaughter of Nidham the villain. For Nidham is one whom Saad can least endure, because he respected "law, custom, or tradition"; he sought other things than "new paths, and new thoughts, and new faces"; he "conformed to the hereditary image of man"; and he was uninterested in being "different from the universality of other beings". What could be more villainous! The melodrama is finally climaxed by the detection of Saad's disguise in Kasir, the city which he had nearly annihilated, and by the rise of the hero and heroine to the "High Places" of a common uniqueness. For the Christian Evanthia acknowledges her love for the infidel Mussulman; she had nothing to overlook except that he murdered her parents, after having dishonored her mother, whose throat he had bitten in two.

And she allows herself to be stoned to death with her "lion-man" by the "dog-race" whose city and kinsmen he had slaughtered.

Ultimately, one objects not so much to the unreality of the characters in this novel, to the monstrosity and ghastliness of the melodrama, or to the cunning lubricity, as to the endeavor to universalize the passionately ruthless "lion-man" and to justify his ethics. After shuddering at Saad's inhuman massacres and nameless license, the reader is supposed to find consolation in the edifying reflection that "Saad's spirit is no more diseased than that of any one of us. Only he enjoys an innocence and a simplicity we have lost".

HARRY HAYDEN CLARK

BUT NOT FOR LOVE *by Beatrice Kean Seymour* (KNOPF. $2.50)

NO LONGER is the wise child that knows its own father a striking figure; modern fiction is simply overrun with wise children who see both parents, and all encompassing adults, with crystal clearness. One of the wisest of these fictional children is Vickey Jardine, a young Londoner who is the heroine of *But Not For Love*. At eighteen she perceives unerringly every underlying motive and weakness in her dull, futile mother and her clever, philandering father. At twenty she is writing penetrating reviews and has already produced a novel so significant that a friend, travelling in Europe, finds it staring at her, "a whole row of it, often, from every decent bookshop—you and Mr. Galsworthy upholding together the prestige of the English novel".

But Vickey is no conventional, undisciplined young artist; she has surveyed the contemporary moral scene, and has not found it good. She is determined, despite all challengers, to remain a romantic and an idealist; and she yearns for a "love made deathless, running like a thread of gold through life and out across eternity!"

In the middle of the book the scene changes abruptly to the wilds of Northumberland; and the English countryside, as ever, even in the most sterile of modern novels, reveals its ageless charm. The rambling farmhouse, the

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gnarled orchard, the windswept ridge and the hawthorn dell, the passionate yeoman and the voluptuous dairymaid run convincingly true to form. But those who have given full credence to the tale of Vickey's wisdom may not find her conduct in this scene equally convincing. For the dire tragedy that overtakes her is due to a peculiar stupidity on her part. If the style were not so lush, one might suspect here a satire on modern youthful omniscience. Apparently the habit of reading one's elders like a book renders it increasingly difficult to obey the ancient maxim, "Know thyself".

That Vickey should have fallen desperately in love with the handsome but amoral yeoman is plausible enough; that is an old, old story. But doubtless every survivor from a less enlightened age will be able to recall several young women in this very plight who admitted, shrewdly if sullenly, that from such earthly lovers they could not expect unearthly virtues. If Vickey had carried with her to Northumberland even a shred of her London wisdom, she must have known that in her passion for Murray Gullan she was utterly scrapping her idealism for something that, at the moment, she valued more. No one with half an eye would have picked Murray Gullan to carry a deathless love "like a thread of gold through life and out across eternity"; it would have taken a convent maiden of legendary innocence to expect of *him* an idealistic fidelity. He certainly made no pretences. And so, when the wise and gentle Vickey runs murderously amuck upon discovering that her husband is all that he seems to be, one is more inclined to yawn than to weep. Though the ending of *But Not For Love* is strikingly melodramatic, it may be, in a sense, inescapable. It seems rather a pity that so few fiction writers of today appear to be conversant with E. M. Forster's theory that love tends to be drawn out of scale and to bulk too enormously in novels, rendering them monotonous.

RUTH FRISBIE MOORE

THE LIMESTONE TREE *by Joseph Hergesheimer* (KNOPF. $2.50)

A DOZEN years ago Mr. Hergesheimer was first hailed as one of the novelists who were rescuing American fiction from the swamp of absurd romanticism into which writers like Thomas Nelson Page, Paul Leicester Ford and Winston Churchill had betrayed it. Today, when a little polished writing and a little cultivation and elegance do not stun us quite so much, he seems rather to be continuing the tradition that such men established. Today he strikes us as having been born too late. In the first decade of this century he might have flourished without inhibitions and revelled in such ornaments of our past as Salem, colonial Virginia and pioneer Kentucky to his heart's content. For it is plain that Mr. Hergesheimer is a romantic with a genuine flair for the highfalutin. He may try to save his face with a hundred cultural ruses, he may prink and prune, he may track down nuances rather than employ primary colors, but what he really likes are gallant gestures, tony melodramas and people of a certain social standing. In his treatment of such things I cannot find the slightest trace of adult irony.

The Limestone Tree follows very much after the pattern of *Java Head*, *The Three Black Pennys* and *Balisand* except that it lacks their intermittent charm. It is the story of a Kentucky family—the best family in the state, as one of its members confesses without being contradicted. It begins in 1770 and ends in 1890, the blood of a pioneer and a Long Hunter thinning down through the generations into that of a Parisian worldling. In the interim the Abels and Sashes participate in all the "history" that the Kentucky bluegrass can boast of. Some of them are killed in duels, some in battle; one is vulgarly assassinated, one disappears into the forest, two or three are left to grow old and garrulous. None of them achieves the faintest corporeality, none the faintest significance, as

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an individual. There is to be said of them as a family that they stand for a tradition out of which has grown the "Kentucky Colonel" who for thirty years has provided comic relief in second-rate plays.

The glamorous is all very well, but it must spring out of something which warms the heart and fires the imagination. The bluegrass tradition does neither, for it lies too close to caricature and too distant from authentic romance. It exemplifies nothing but a childish and unverified boast—the high-falutin boast that the women of the bluegrass were the loveliest, the horses the fastest, the men the bravest and the liquor the strongest that could be found anywhere in the world. People like the Sashes and the Abels originated this boast, and believed it. And what can be the ethical or psychological importance of such people—people whose protracted gallantries and incessant heroics meant wasted, deluded, inconsequential lives?

At no point has Mr. Hergesheimer really allowed these people to come to grips with life. When a situation overwhelms them, when they reach an impasse that might serve to enlarge their souls or widen their understanding, they slash their throats or shoot their cousins dead.

At the end of the book it appears for a moment as though Mr. Hergesheimer were going to turn ironical. A young man named John Dixon Foulkes, a descendant of the early Sashes and Abels whose immediate family have lived for two generations in Paris, where he has been brought up in worldliness and Continental culture, visits his Kentucky relatives on the family estate. These grand people with their provincial noses in the air and their sacred traditions impress him about as much as Ozymandias must have impressed the traveller in the desert. But where the traveller must have chuckled over Ozymandias's modest claims, John Dixon Foulkes, sitting at his great-uncle's knee and hearing the family history, is moved to tears. Parisian to his finger tips though he be, overnight he decides to live forever after in the bluegrass at which he had sneered the day before.

So the irony—which though pat enough would have seemed to be inevitable—dissolves before our eyes, and the last of the Abels settles down where the first began. It is all—no other word will do—absurd. The rest of the story might just have happened, but that a worldly young Parisian who adored his Paris would embrace Kentucky is out of the question. But of course John Dixon Foulkes wasn't really worldly for the very good reason that Mr. Hergesheimer isn't really worldly. His story, from start to finish, is never a comedy; it is always a romance. And it is only the more lacking in honest worth because it is pretentious. Mr. Hergesheimer did not mean it simply to be a yarn; he meant it to sum up part of our national history, to serve as interpretation, as re-creation. But it is none of these things, either as realism or (as for example Miss Roberts's *The Great Meadow* is) as poetry.

Glamour is of necessity an illusion. But the greatest of all illusions is one indulged in by Mr. Hergesheimer here: the belief that what is glamorous has significance in addition to having charm.

LOUIS KRONENBERGER

TWENTY-FOUR HOURS *by Louis Bromfield* (STOKES. $2.50)

To anyone interested in the literary development of a novelist whose work is preëminently vital, *Twenty-four Hours* (published serially under the title *Shattered Glass*) will have special significance. Louis Bromfield has tended more and more to work away from subjective probings into character toward a broader, almost panoramically impersonal representation of the whole machine called life. And in *Twenty-four Hours* he is trying to give us an X-ray cinema of the machinery at work. When Savina Jerrold, in the story, beholds (with Victorian embarrassment)

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just such an X-ray of her old friend Hector's stomach, and murmurs: "I will cling to the soul and not think about the machinery", she voices the ironic antithesis of Louis Bromfield's behavioristic psychology.

The story begins with a dull dinner party at Hector Champion's and ends the next day with a tea at Savina Jerrold's. The guests, either by birth or by personal achievement, belong to New York's upper social level. In opposition to these cogs in the wheel of Society is a group drawn from a lower stratum. Each of these people reaches a particular climax in his or her life during the twenty-four hour period. The murder of Rosa Dugan, night-club singer, fuses the action between the groups.

Since the characters are obviously types, we must look beneath their labelled exteriors to discover Mr. Bromfield's intention. Their lives, in other words, are meant to have a social or moral significance rather than an individual significance. The implication is that people who have had to work, to overcome real obstacles in order to survive, have greater social significance than those whose sheltered minds and untrained hands are soft, and who—like old Hector—will rot, not develop, with age. At the underworld extreme, Rosa Dugan has been courageous enough to live boldly and passionately to get what she wants from life.

The flash-back method employed in the narration, with its rapid, revolving-stage movement, produces upon the reader an effect of artificial haste. At the same time there are passages in which too little pruning has been done. Yet no writer has reflected more completely than Bromfield the nervous pace of contemporary American life. No one —least of all in the medium of a best-seller the surface-pattern of which is designed for Hollywood—has so clearly perceived the pathetic, adolescent fear beneath its sex-obsessed leisure. One must admire Mr. Bromfield for having so nearly done what he set out to do. It was, after all, a fairly large order.

PARADISE CITY *by Henry Channon* (DUTTON. $2.50)

THE author of *Paradise City* is a young man who, we believe, deserves immediate recognition. His first novel, *Joan Kennedy*, published last year, excited probably less favorable notice than it should have done in consideration of a literary quality far above the average.

Paradise City is a novel made up of six loosely connected episodes. The scene of the first is a small Wisconsin town on the eve of a prosperity boom which brings about inevitable changes in the financial, social, and emotional relationships between certain prominent families and persons. For the five remaining episodes, which radiate outward from the complex network of the first, Mr. Channon has lifted five characters, and traced the development of their separate life-patterns in settings as diverse as London, Paris, Venice and Chicago.

Amy Plank, frustrated in love, goes on a lonely adventure abroad, to find at Ravenna her ideal in the effigy of Guidarello Guidarelli; Danny Springer shakes off the alien dust of Paradise City to discover a spiritual kinship with the Viennese; Polly Peacock, capitalizing on her unusual beauty, moves ever upward in the social scale to become mistress of a famous old English estate. The last episode traces the apotheosis of Jim and Bridget Barlow in Chicago. It is, however, with the story of commonplace, jolly Rosie Tyler, who becomes a *succès de guerre* in Paris, that Mr. Channon's swiftly developing talent is at its best.

The disjointed, episodic method leaves much, technically, to be desired. One feels that as unrelated short stories these five sketches, pared of non-essentials and less vaguely outlined, might have been more effective. But there is a great deal to be said for Mr. Channon's penetrating analysis of character working either in or out of harmony with its environment. He has, moreover, suc-

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THE LAST DAYS OF SHYLOCK *by Ludwig Lewisohn* (HARPERS. $2.50)

IT WAS the star system of the theatre that raised Shylock to prominence. Originally, as we know, he was either the villain or the clown of *The Merchant of Venice*; but in modern productions he is so much the hero that some people imagine he gives the play its title. This change was brought about on the stage through the need of an emotional part for the star performer. A somewhat similar need must have prompted Mr. Lewisohn in the writing of this book, for no Irving, Warfield, or Adler could have entered more personally into the part of the outwitted moneylender, despised Antonio so (and "that effeminate young advocate from Rome"), or pleaded with so much bitterness the cause of the persecuted Jew. I must confess that in reading this prose sequel to the Shakespearean play I could not distinguish between the emotions of Shylock and the emotions of Mr. Lewisohn. Whether Shylock hated the Gentile, detested the Christian, or loathed the Goy (no unfair summary of what he feels in this book) I felt that Mr. Lewisohn did the same. As we say of a good performance on the stage, he *was* Shylock.

The plot of this self-written vehicle for his emotions is not complex. Shylock, crushed by his sudden reversal of fortune, returns home, signs the deed that is sent after him, the next day suffers baptism at the hands of his persecutors, and runs immediately to the synagogue and recants. A few hours later he leaves Venice, with his secret wealth, for Stamboul, to put himself under the protection of Joseph Nassi, the Jewish treasurer of the Sultan. Nassi sends him with other Jews to Tiberias to attempt to build a Jewish city as near as possible to Jerusalem. This Zionist project fails, however, owing to conflict with the Arabs. Shylock then goes to Cyprus, and after living there a while encounters his daughter Jessica and her two children. With tears she confesses that the fortunes of her Christian husband Lorenzo had dwindled and at last he had deserted her. Shylock dies peacefully after circumcising his half-Goy grandsons and preparing one of them for the Rabbinate.

Since Mr. Lewisohn has so closely identified his own bitterness with that of Shylock, it is necessary to point out that there is a difference between the art of acting and the art of writing. It is enough for the actor to *be* the character; the writer, among other things, must *see* him. One wonders if Mr. Lewisohn so much as tried to be objective. One also wonders if his ill-naturedness will not promote ill feeling. A sympathetic performance of Shylock on the stage should have the good effect of diminishing anti-Semitism; a performance like Mr. Lewisohn's, which is addressed almost exclusively to a Jewish audience, cannot fail to stir up rancor.

One would overlook these considerations if the book were a good work of art. But it is not. It is learnedly and capably written, but without imagination. (How can there be imagination when the author loves nothing—not even Judaism—nothing except a grievance of his own?) This book is an exploitation of persecution, a piece of professional Judaizing that the sensitive Jew and Gentile alike, I believe, will find most unpleasant.

GERALD SYKES

DUMB-ANIMAL *by Osbert Sitwell* (LIPPINCOTT. $2.50)

IN THESE stories Osbert Sitwell shines out as the most brilliant ornament of the already fabulous enough family to which he belongs. He establishes himself incidentally as quite the cleverest of that post-war generation of English writers who have seen no other course than to accompany the dying conflagration on Nero's fiddle. Mr. Sitwell is even more clever than Aldous Huxley, for example, because he takes enough pain with

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his style to make his wit graceful as well as mordant. As a stylist Mr. Sitwell can indeed be compared only with such a curator of the jewelled period as Max Beerbohm—with the difference, perhaps, that Mr. Sitwell's leisurely-wrought prose also serves to accentuate with a sad irony the essential horror of his themes. He writes in the grand manner as if he still thought it were possible. He swathes his moribund society in tinted mummy-cloths with a dexterity touched with epicurean glamour that makes of the embalming process itself a kind of melancholy artistic pleasure.

This cleverness is not without its hazards: exaggeration leers on every page; pure fantasy is just around the corner. Also some of the characters do not quite escape caricature —poor Miss Tibbits, for instance, who was "the last surviving descendant of a thousand curates". But at his best Mr. Sitwell does not push the humorous possibilities of a character, a situation, an idea beyond the point where credulity surrenders, although he pushes them far enough. Perhaps "Charles and Charlemagne" offers the most diverting example. This is the chronicle of Lady de Montfort, whose curious passion it was to alter the decoration of her house and the foods of her table to suit the particular nationality or tastes of each of her successive lovers. Mr. Sitwell is not content with one or two illustrations; he must provide his crazy Park Lane hostess with lover after lover until every style of decoration known to civilized and barbaric man is represented. So minute are his descriptions of each "period" that this story may be read as a sort of handy guide to Interior Decoration through the ages. Then there is also the case of Mrs. Chitty, whose immunity from disease and wholly sociable nature caused her to spread the germ of Spanish influenza in so many different quarters of the globe that she was probably the god-mother of the great epidemic of 1918-19. Similarly, in another tale, the idea that book reviewers devoutly expect all poets to die young results in the most hilarious satire of literary people since "Savanarola Brown".

There is little communication of what is sometimes called "strict emotion" in these stories. There are no deep soul-struggles, no young lovers, no moonlight that is not promptly galvanized into something less soft and bright. Not even in "Happy Endings", the most personal of all, in which Moncrieff's translation of Proust has noticeably affected the style, is there any pulse-taking of the human heart-beat for its own sake. There is, instead, in all these stories plenty of almost everything else—albino rabbits, bacilli, snuff boxes, crystal skulls, Chelsea pottery, Chinese goldfish and magic wands. Symbolic of all these lives is the history of Robert Mainwroth, rich connoisseur of mechanical toys, who dies when the bird he has loved, the only *living* thing he has ever loved, perishes in his magnificent mother-of-pearl cage. Throughout the whole book man's fevered gropings are slyly likened to the dazed bewilderment of a dumb animal; and over one story Mr. Sitwell has written this telling epigraph: ". . . *The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?*"

BLIND MAN'S MARK *by Martin Armstrong* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $2.50)

THE variations which Mr. Armstrong has been able to wring out of the classic model of the English Public School novel (which is less a tradition of fiction than a British institution) are not quite distinct enough to compel interest on primary grounds alone. Here are the elements again in their old familiar order—early home influences, Public School, London initiation. No effort is made to avoid monotony by seizing the worn pattern of experience by the throat, so to speak, as in the recent *Other Man's Saucer* of Keith Winters, in which the undergraduate author leapt over the well-smoothed transitions and

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distilled his adolescents down to a few bundles of badly twisted nerves. Mr. Armstrong, on the other hand, revels in the transitions, for he has a style, and his style consists above all else in preserving a certain leisurely decorum in taking whatever fences the emotions of his people may thrust in the way. It is a good style and lacks almost nothing except vitality. The same is equally true for his characters. One wonders what kind of poetry old Oliver Glynde would write or what that music was like which his grandson Adrian composes. The very charm of these people with the beautiful names depends so much on one's acceptance of their complete incapacity to tolerate reality of any sort. Like the style in which they are encased, they are consistently and exquisitely superior. And Mr. Armstrong, one is certain, is also superior, for he knows what few literary men ever really know—the right tastes to have in fields outside their own. It is not enough to mention Racine, Landor, John Donne; one must, when writing of music, know the names of Bach, Byrd and Ravel; one must know that Burgundies have names like Romanée, Hospices de Beaune, Nuits Saint-Georges.

Perhaps the most satisfactory portions of the book are those in which the old poet-sage Oliver Glynde—who talks like someone out of Thomas Love Peacock—delivers his heterodox views on art, literature, and other matters extraneous to the narrative. In these passages Mr. Armstrong writes like an intelligent and accomplished essayist.

WILLIAM TROY

THE GENTLE LIBERTINE *by Colette* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $2.00)

THE first half of this two-part story, the latest of Colette's novels to be translated into English, stands at the top of her list. The portrait of Minne, the innocent, pretty and demure adolescent who treasures the very devil in her soul, who is transported by dreams of a passionate love with an Apache, some silken but terrible fellow wearing a cap and striped, form-fitting jersey, is an extraordinary revelation. And the picture of Minne's cousin, Antoine, the tall, overgrown boy going through his most awkward age, who is partly captivated, partly repelled, but wholly bewildered by her, is, though less prominent, equally perfect.

In Part II Minne, now married, still seeks, though less naïvely, that same kind of violent attachment of which visions filled her girlhood dreams. But her three lovers leave her as they found her. Her spirit remains virginal until she discovers fulfilment where she least expected to find it. The erotic episodes are boldly but delicately handled.

Colette is an extraordinary story-teller. Her themes are slight; her people are shallow, unimportant; the erotic is the single instrument on which she plays. But within her self-imposed limits she approaches perfection both in penetration into character and in method of expression. She makes her points so swiftly, effortlessly and truly that though one reads each of her brief novels at a bound one returns to linger and admire their subtlety and grace.

FRED T. MARSH

THE JEALOUS GHOST *by L. A. G. Strong* (KNOPF. $2.50)

IN this story of an American who goes to visit for the first time his English cousins in the West Highland house where his ancestors had lived, there are two rather different interests. One is a preoccupation—altogether too familiar in English fiction—with the locale and its influence upon people. The other is an interest in subtle distinctions of character.

Though it is an important element in all Strong's writing, this first preoccupation is not pleasing, because it appears neither profound nor spontaneous. This writer's feeling for "the land" seems to be that of a

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tourist whose sensibilities are fluttered by views and sunsets. At its worst it has the pale hue of a literary emotion, a borrowed concept. It is significant that Strong's descriptions are all of the vague panoramic variety —which usually means that the author is—actually—a stranger to the country—and that his account of peasants is too affectionate. These latter—Old Michael, Mr. and Mrs. Ian —are not characters but picturesques; unconvincing visions of rustic virtue. The crippled boy with his distaste for mankind and his love for trees is, to apply the mildest possible term, a grotesque. Yet there is true feeling in Strong's account of civilized people. His distinctions between persons imaginative and unimaginative, perceptive and obtuse, and his way of distinguishing their qualities by describing them in relation with children—these are spontaneous and unique. In this vein, if it could be separated from that of mere literary inheritances, and worked with more attention to style and form, lies the possibility of a delicate comedy akin to that of Jane Austen or Henry James.

A JEW IN LOVE *by Ben Hecht* (COVICI-FRIEDE. $2.50)

THIS Jew, Boshere, with his extravagant egotism and perverted will, is an interesting character. He regards the people whom he encounters as nourishment for his vanity—a vanity which is perpetually athirst and never satisfied. So, by flattery and other measures, no matter how unscrupulous, he seduces his acquaintances into worshippers of Boshere, and then loses interest in them. He is, however, defeated at last, when, in Tillie he meets a woman of no character, with nothing about her to subdue and turn to his own account.

This character deserved a better book and a more artful and restrained treatment. As usual with Ben Hecht's writings, there is more gross talent than net accomplishment. A reading of the first few pages of this novel arouses an interest which does not last, which shortly gives way to boredom and satiety, and then—as the author exchanges his pen for a bludgeon—to something like disgust. The reason for this collapse is perhaps that the central interest of the novel, the character of Boshere, is too thoroughly explored, mapped, and cut over in the first twenty pages. What occurs thereafter—the affair with Dr. and Mrs. Goldstein, whose affection for one another Boshere destroys; with his wife; with his family; with Alice, one mistress, and Tillie, another—all this has the air of so much illustrative material. It does not greatly deepen, nor enlarge, nor even dramatize, but merely repeats what we know already of the character. And at the same time the style takes leave of all restraint, all subtlety, on wings of Menckenian bombast and hyperbole.

FREDERICK DUPEE

OLD SHIP *by Lennox Kerr* (MACMILLAN. $2.00)

AIMING to bare the mainsprings of the contest between brain and brawn, between expediency and ethics, *Old Ship* reveals a vivid sense of background and an insight into character. It is a compelling story with an ascending series of climaxes.

The fascination of the sea and man's power over it, as exemplified by ships, has brought Dixon aboard the *Hillgrove* as a deck hand. He is a stolid, earth-rooted, rustic lad, who bears the hardships of his new life manfully, even gladly, but proves a very awkward sailor despite his zeal. One day he learns that the girl he has left behind is expecting to become a mother and needs him. He feels it his duty to return, but is opposed by Captain Busby, who forbids his leaving the steamer and thwarts his effort to desert. Dixon becomes a sullen, brooding, insane enemy of the ship and of her master, whom he openly vows to kill.

When warned of the danger, "Hard Case"

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Busby, who in the past has broken the will of many men, is seized with fear and the shame of fear. He struggles to conquer it. As captain of the ship he can easily dispose of Dixon by putting him in irons. But he is humiliated to think that it is the cloak of authority that protects him. He resolves to divest himself of his cloak temporarily and to face Dixon as man to man. His action is misunderstood. His mates think he is afraid, and in his heart he knows that they are right. One night, when the sea howls for the ship and threatens to devour it, Dixon starts for the captain. But Busby is rescued by the storm. The ship has been damaged and faces wreck. His mates appeal to the captain to resume his duties and save the *Hillgrove*. The crisis reclaims the man. Forgetting his personal mortification, Busby orders Dixon to a difficult task for which strong muscles are needed. Dixon obeys the voice of authority and of the will to survive. His act of simple trust puts him at peace with his ideal and with his conscience. There is safety in obedience to the brain that is qualified to lead.

LOUIS RICH

SHE AND I *by Pamela Frankau* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

PAMELA FRANKAU has written a treatise on the emotion of love. As such it is an intensive and interesting work, revealing that strange confusion of mind and spirit which seemingly overtakes men and women, whether suffering from or glorying in the disease. As a novel it is incoherent and unconvincing—to this reader at least. The book is in two parts and concerns the love of three men for two women. In the first it is Jane, a pianist of worldwide reputation, who holds the three in thrall and leaves them all unsatisfied by her remoteness and her penchant for "withdrawing". In the second it is Helen, who, through some mysterious migration of the spirit, has met them all before in the mind of Jane, filling the spaces there left empty during several of the periods of "withdrawal". She is plain where Jane was beautiful, and by arousing the three from their resigned acceptance of Jane's death she destroys the illusion of their love for her and drives the one to the contemplation of suicide, the second to the arms of his wife and the third to murder.

Miss Frankau has a skilful pen for description, and one sees with equal clearness the garden of the deserted villa where Jane and Dino spent enchanted weeks and the physical attributes of the characters who wander, unhappy and frustrated, through the pages. But in spite of all the introspection, dissection and intimate dialogue the book's central idea is illusive, and the men and women are vaguely searching ghosts.

MILDRED SEITZ

READER, I MARRIED HIM *by Anne Green* (DUTTON. $2.50)

THOSE critics who insist on designating Anne Green as Julian Green's sister will no longer have occasion to beat about the critical bush. In her second novel Miss Green has taken complete possession of a literary heritage of her own. The sphere of social frivolity, madcap sophistication and ingenious tomfoolery has been lawfully preëmpted in this latest publication from a facile pen.

Reader, I Married Him is like the author's previous best-seller, *The Selbys*. Again the follies and foibles of Americans in Paris are caricatured with malicious glee; again the heroine passes smilingly through a series of fantastic situations to a reward indicated by the book's title; and again the story leaps from sense to nonsense within a single page, stimulated by Miss Green's talent for deliciously trivial dialogue. The American heroine of this potpourri of mirth and madness is named Catherine Douglass. Being twenty-four, pretty, romantic, and in Paris, Catherine took unto herself a lover. Gilbert

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was not precisely mercenary; but he was determined to have a richly dowered wife. Once this bit of relevant information is imparted to Catherine, the story moves forward at breakneck speed. Catherine takes up clairvoyance, mixes love philtres, frequents crystal gazers, and finally retrieves her man from the lax embraces of a moneyed flapper. The book closes on a note of domestic bliss as the repentant Gilbert contemplates the glory of paternity. It must be mentioned that Miss Green's minor characters are much more entertaining and memorable than her philandering hero and determined heroine. Andrew Douglass, Catherine's improvident, lavender-scented father, is a delightful portrait of an irresponsible *bon vivant* whose provisions for the welfare of his children are creations of inspired lunacy. Anne Calhoun, fat and fifty, who waddled into a beauty parlor once too often, is an amusing picture of a sentimental dowager. A superstitious, mind-reading quadroon called Eugenia and two characters with the miraculous names of Hugh the Jew and Chester Hooe complete the cast of Miss Green's farce.

This is a diverting novel, written in a mood of light-hearted exuberance. The pasteboard people who roam through its fashionable episodes are no less the creations of an original imagination. *Reader, I Married Him* is for those readers who prefer their comedy flavored with wit.

WILLIAM J. FADIMAN

OLD NEW ORLEANS *by Francis Tinker and Edward Larocque Tinker* (APPLETON. FOUR VOLS. $5.00)

A CHARMINGLY boxed set containing four small volumes upon the jackets of which are sketched scenes from glamorous old New Orleans comes from the typewriters of two authors who know their romantic city and are able to re-create for the reader the piquancy of a day that is dead. Some years ago Carl Van Doren declared—and truthfully I think—that the local-color novel had invented few memorable plots, devised no new styles, added few notable characters to fiction, but had contented itself with the creation of types and puppets, with sentimentality as its dominant theme. While the Old New Orleans series does not refute Mr. Van Doren's criticism of the type it represents, the stories have virtues that justify their existence: they hold the reader's interest; they deal with a people whose customs and characteristics are worth recording; they interpret, in effects upon the characters, epochs in our national life which historians have somewhat neglected; and they reflect the charm of the quaint city that furnishes their setting. Their plots, however, are not memorable; their characters are far from notable; and the sentimentality of the Reconstruction novelist is detectable throughout. Yet the Creole type is sympathetically established in the four books—that strange Spanish-French person who can hate and love with wholesome abandon, who can rise to sacrificial heights, who can dance to the tune of the gayest piper or starve pridefully.

Widows Only, the first of the series, is the least gripping of the four stories. It concerns itself, however, with a situation that has not heretofore been presented in American fiction—one that grows out of the Creole's loyalty to France and hatred of the German-American. A Creole girl and a boy whose ancestors were German are sacrificed to the old groundless hatred which back in the sixties burned in the hearts of the first settlers on Louisiana. Toinette, who sacrifices her lover to the whim of an erratic, invalid mother, and Karl Link, an unforgivably acquiescent lover, are puppets moved upon the board to prove the authors' thesis.

Strife is a somewhat stronger story. Though the balance of the paretic Popo Duplantier against the blind, nagging egotist, Marilisse Labatut, in the contending couples is rather too pat for life, the characters of Artémise Duplantier and Jacques Labatut are so well

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done that the effect is one of verisimilitude. The story ends upon a note of triumph mixed with doubt as to the ultimate outcome. Not once in the gloomy little story can the reader fail to remember that he is in old New Orleans, where the opening night of the opera is an event of sublime significance.

Closed Shutters is a gruesome tale told from the viewpoint of an old family servant. The Negress Emma conforms too closely to the pattern by which the ante-bellum Negro of Reconstruction literature was cut. Stock characters also are the others who cast their slight shadows across the pages of the book—the kindly, unwisely generous Judge Markham, whose many charities leave his own family destitute; the ineffectual Mrs. Markham, who evolves gracefully into taking paying guests while Emma does the work; and the impoverished family on Annunciation Street to whom death was preferable to making their plight known. Emma has frequently appeared in fiction but never, I think, in life. She is the type that Thomas Nelson Page made popular forty years ago, "the accessory to the white man", the Negro as the superior race would like him to be. Emma's wit is forced; her dialect is unnatural. The authors do not probe beneath the surface of the Negress to find the mainspring that keeps the wheels going. I am convinced that no Negro ever said to another, "De onlies' helpin' you can do is hangin' by yo' tail in Affica, helpin' yo'se'f to coconuts . . . You is de kind o' nigger dat make me blieve in segergation". I cannot believe that Emma's story of the Creation had its origin in any negroid apochrapha ever unearthed.

Mardi Gras Masks is the most successful of the four books. New Orleans in holiday attire is delightfully painted, with its volatile Creoles moving lightly across the scene. The action covers the span of but one gala day; a dominant character holds the center of the stage, working to overcome an obstacle that seems insurmountable; and suspense is sustained till the end.

The four stories add a considerable bit to the social history of America. The authors have successfully turned their cameras upon New Orleans in the sixties, the seventies, the eighties, and the nineties.

EUDORA RAMSAY RICHARDSON

THE LIGHT THAT NEVER WAS *by Katharine Fullerton Gerould.* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.00)

It is the clarity of Mrs. Gerould's style that keeps her new novel from being commonplace. She tells of a girl who grows tired of her admirable fiancé, tired of the invalid aunt to whom she is a companion. She escapes to New York for a vacation, casually meets a young man in the theatre, and goes off with him to the seaside. For three days they shout poetry into the wind together and generally rhapsodize. The adventure is puritanically innocent. With great strength of mind they refrain even from kissing each other. They recognize that their feeling—whatever it may be—is too rare and unsubstantial for the workaday world, and Tony goes back to his private life, Lydia goes back to hers. She finds, too, that her Apollonian fiancé is far more interesting and acute than she had ever imagined; and we leave them very much in love with each other. From time to time Mrs. Gerould seems to be the victim of romantic heresies about "being understood"; and Lydia's conversation can be insufferably bright. The portraiture of other characters, however, is often quite sharp and incisive; so effective, indeed, that we are left wondering whether, after all, Mrs. Gerould was unconscious that her heroine is a rather conceited and muddle-minded little prig.

ALAN PORTER

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BIOGRAPHY

THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM: A LIFE OF ANNIE BESANT *by Gertrude Marvin Williams* (COWARD-MCCANN. $3.50)

A SMALL girl in a Victorian household resented very bitterly the privileges of her elder brother. Henry was taken to the Great Exhibition and came back with his pockets stuffed with treasures. Annie must keep modestly at home. When Father died, Henry rode in state at the very front of the funeral procession, right behind the hearse. Annie was packed upstairs with the female relatives, creatures too tender for the shock of the interment.

Annie rebelled. She climbed trees and played cricket; and when her brother's friends eluded her attempts to join in their games, she dreamed of herself as a knight in armor, slaying dragons and rescuing princesses. Her struggle for recognition continued all through her life; and perhaps a feeling that after all she was only a woman always accompanied it. She challenged the supremacy of men, but she never liked or respected women. Her achievements were astonishing; but they were always carried through under the influence and inspiration of some more definite character.

When she married the Reverend Frank Besant, she was young, romantic and "as proud as Lucifer". The marriage was a failure from the beginning. For a few years the misguided rector tried to bring her under control, but finally she broke away and went to London. She met Charles Bradlaugh and was swept into atheism. She lectured militantly all over England. With Bradlaugh she fought the first notorious battle for Birth Control. She became an infamous woman, and won the hearts of thousands by her seriousness, her courage and her beauty.

Under the influence of another friend she joined the Fabian Society, organized and led the first great strike of women-laborers in England and worked on the London School Board. She helped W. T. Stead in his grandiose and rather vague crusades. And just when she was losing interest in Socialism and feeling herself stale and worked out, she reviewed *The Secret Doctrine* and went to see Madame Blavatsky.

The meeting was decisive for the rest of her life. Madame Blavatsky died; and in time Mrs. Besant succeeded her as head of the Theosophical Society. She still had the need of a self-elected guide and superior, and she installed in that position the very questionable and compromising "Bishop" Leadbeater. Her work in Indian politics and education has passed into history. At the age of seventy she became President of the Indian National Congress. But for the past forty years it is undoubtedly the personality of Madame Blavatsky that has set the main lines of her career.

Mrs. Williams tells the story of Mrs. Besant's life in a sober, straightforward way. There are not many graces to her book; but perhaps that is all to the good. The plain tale is astonishing enough. Where Mrs. Williams admits interpretations, she is temperate and sensible. She has little sympathy for Theosophy; but it is impossible to finish the biography without feeling almost of veneration for a spirit so energetic and so capable.

The anecdote which tells most is of Mrs. Besant's reception in London, fifty years after her meeting with Bradlaugh. Cables of congratulation were read from the Prime Minis-

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ter and half the members of the Cabinet. Five hundred organizations for social work had sent their delegates. She addressed her audience and turned white with emotion at the cheers which followed. Leaning on the arm of a friend she whispered, "It would have been much easier if it had been a hostile crowd".

ALAN PORTER

THE LIFE OF ROBERT BURNS *by Catherine Carswell* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $3.75)

OF ALL the English Romantics none has managed to divert attention from his work to his life with more complete success than Robert Burns. There is hardly any respectable criticism of Burns's poetry in existence; there is only the endless stream of biographical chit-chat that began early in his own lifetime. Even the earwigs and bluestockings of eighteenth-century Edinburgh, the Doctor Creeches and Mrs. Dunlops of the time, were unable to approach his work without being overcome by the consciousness that he was a ploughman, or a patriot, or a kind of rustic Don Juan. Since then, of course, the disentanglement of his amours has provided a steady source of academic recreation. His reputation, indeed, has come to depend rather more than less on his various extraneous accomplishments.

The most excellent feature of Mrs. Carswell's study is the thoroughness with which various aspects of eighteenth-century Scotch life have been reconstructed to situate Burns in his proper time and place. Her method adheres to the most scholarly traditions of accuracy, completeness and fairness. The only difficulty is that a reluctance to commit herself to an interpretative point of view toward her subject causes the final picture that emerges to be little different from the one that stands out in even the baldest account of Burns's life in a college text-book. All that is accomplished without such a point of view is a somewhat more amplified outline than the one already existing in most people's minds. Although Mrs. Carswell frankly professes sympathy toward her subject her attitude never enters defensively in her treatment of any of the wholly disconcerting episodes of Burns's life. The name of D. H. Lawrence on the dedication page may suggest a possible identification of the subject with one of the more Dionysiac of Lawrence's heroes. But this is no more than a suggestion.

While Mrs. Carswell has taken pains to build up the social background of Burns's period she has made little effort to show the influence of its various ideological stresses on his sensibility. She records without comment that he read Rousseau at eighteen. She refers to his enthusiasm for Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* with too little awareness of the permanent effect that this apostle of eighteenth-century Sentimentalism had on Burns's whole process of feeling and thinking. Yet all those influences of Naturism, Sentimentalism, Equalitarianism that flourished around him undoubtedly led to the excesses of conduct to which he has so largely owed his reputation. There was Burns the rustic libertine, the lover of coarse-grained Jean Armour, the "Natural Man" of Rousseau's utopia. And there was Burns the sentimentalist, the darling of the Edinburgh salons, the Sylvander of Mrs. Dunlop's honeyed correspondence. Never are the two men quite reconciled in Mrs. Carswell's biography—and perhaps they never were.

WILLIAM TROY

WILSON THE UNKNOWN: AN EXPLANATION OF AN ENIGMA OF HISTORY *by Wells Wells* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.50)

WOODROW WILSON was a great man. He was, perhaps, the greatest man whom America has yet produced. It is the thesis of this extraordinary character study that Woodrow Wilson was a very intelligent man, that "he was the first successful politician of *all* time

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to apply a trained, disciplined and unusual mind to the practice of statecraft, as a science, in a representative government", and that his worst "mistakes" on analysis were profound and intelligent moves in the greatest political chess game that has been played in modern history.

The pseudonymous author of this book is described as a New York corporation lawyer who voted for Wilson in 1912 but returned to the Republican fold in 1916. Whoever he is, he has paid splendid tribute to the intellect of the War President, "didactic, democratic, dictatorial and dogmatic" though he were. To him, Wilson was no enigma, but "the radiant, glittering, shining man", a supreme example of human intelligence in political action, the master of "the play-political, in which one idea is made to ride another", and uniquely the "master of the inductive process of reasoning, which few men and all women employ". A man who never gave his reasons except for an ulterior reason, whose Mexican policy "was based upon a broad statesmanlike policy. We shall revive it if the Monroe Doctrine is to survive", and one of our few modern masters of financial and economic statesmanship.

While selected passages may give the impression that this is unadulterated appreciation, the author's argument is simply that Wilson's discovery that he had "an intellect and a first-class mind" was absolutely accurate, that his career at Princeton and the intricate squabbles of academic politics supply the key to his subsequent career, and that his New Jersey campaign is a classic which ranks "in politics, with Stonewall Jackson's Valley campaigns, in military tactics". Wilson's was the method of the flank march and the union of forces on the field of battle which distinguished Jackson's strategy. Wilson was a Virginian, and there is certainly something to be said for the parallel when we find Wilson, elected in 1916 for keeping us out of war, leading us into war in 1917.

The author finds that the letter of October 25, 1918, calling for a Democratic Congress was not the "astounding imbecility" it seemed. "He was looking forward to 1920!" Similarly, he claims that Wilson deliberately goaded the Senate to reject the Versailles Treaty in order to win election to a third term in 1920. While the explanation from pathology, that Wilson was a sick man, is simpler, there is force in this argument, especially if taken in conjunction with the Mexican policy, which had to be left in abeyance, during the World War. The author believes that Wilson planned to institute "directed democracy" in Mexico, or intervention followed by a protectorate, in combination with a pro-League campaign in 1920, to bring America into the League and utilize her monopoly of food and credit to reorganize the world, even against the will of the United States, while establishing a moral empire as far south as Panama.

> What an adventure he had planned! Democracy had no cause to fear him, though he purposed to achieve unlimited power. He planned to spend those few remaining years, eagerly contriving a good world for children to be born into. But . . . it is a weary world, and few of us leave it alive.

Many will question the links in this fine-spun chain of argument. Nevertheless, Wilson was neither a meddler nor a moralist, neither moron nor Messiah, but a very practical politician who had demonstrated an uncanny ability to get his own way. If he had not been stricken down, who can tell whether the world's great age might not have begun anew and the golden days have returned? Wilson was a man great enough to make faiths and empires wracks of a dissolving dream. Somewhere, in America, his spirit sleeps like that of a Barbarossa, as a force which will return to lead our race to victory over the machine and the ideas which the machine engenders. While much of Wilson's policy lies in dust, the things which he

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stood for survive and time is proving many of his ideas entirely right. We have an unholy habit of candying our statesmen in sweetness and light. Wilson was a fighter and a force, a great mind greatly directed to the solution of great problems. He was the only man produced by modern capitalist society whose words and actions matched the audacities and practical achievements of a Lenin. In 1920 it was commonplace that the future of the world lay between Wilson and Lenin. We promptly expressed our preference for bonds. Today we are not sure that we guessed right. And when a corporation lawyer, such as the author of this book, comments that

> Unless big business capitalism is guided by enlightened statesmanship in the nation's government, it may well be demonstrated that the evils of communism are, at most, not greater than those of uncontrolled and undirected capitalism—

it is time to wonder whether we acted wisely as a people ten years ago in rejecting the greatest American political leader of our generation.

JOHN CARTER

THE LIFE OF FRANÇOIS RABELAIS
by Jean Plattard (KNOPF. $6.00)

THOUGH Rabelais lived four centuries ago, very few of the true facts of his life have been known until recently: legends began to attach themselves to his name even during his lifetime and since his death the myth-makers have had a merry time reconstructing him on the model of Gargantua, Pantagruel, and Panurge. Serious and scientific study of Rabelais really dates from 1903 when Abel Lefranc and other scholars founded the *Société des Etudes Rabelaisiennes* and began to publish a journal which has since become the *Revue du XVIe Siècle*. Next to Lefranc, the most assiduous contributor to our knowledge of this great writer is Professor Jean Plattard of the University of Poitiers, whose life of Rabelais originally published in 1928 has already served as the basis for two biographies in English.

Let no one look for a popular *vie romancée* in the work of Plattard; in fact it might be called the first life of Rabelais that has not been fictionalized beyond all contact with reality. This is just a "straight" biography of the good old foot-noted and well-indexed variety in which the historical method proceeds cautiously to draw a detailed portrait of Rabelais against the background of the glorious sixteenth century. Far from being born in 1483 of a poor innkeeper as the legend had it, François Rabelais was born in 1494 or 1495, the son of a landowner and esteemed lawyer of the royal court of Chinon. After growing up in the Chinonais where he probably studied under the Franciscans of La Baumette, he entered the monastery of Fontenay-le-Comte as a Friar Minor in 1520 and four years later transferred to the Benedictine Order and the near-by monastery of Maillezais in order to freely continue his Hellenistic studies. There and at the Priory of Ligugé, but always under the protection of the powerful bishop Geoffroy d'Estissac, he broadened his contacts with the French humanists and came under the influence of a group of lawyers and *rhétoriqueur* poets. After a brief period of study at the University of Poitiers, he left Poitou in 1527 and drops out of sight until the end of 1530, but the most likely conjecture, based on his later work, is that he spent these years at the universities of Bordeaux, Toulouse, Bourges, Orléans, and Paris. Then after two years (1530-32) as an advanced medical student at the University of Montpellier where making a great innovation in teaching he expounded Hippocrates and Galen from the Greek texts, he was appointed physician to a great hospital in Lyons. In what was then one of the greatest intellectual centers of France, Rabelais soon entered relations with the printers, editing

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Greek and Latin texts for them. The same year a popular giant story suggested to him his proper vein, and the distinguished scholar abandoned his Latin commentaries to bring out *Pantagruel* (1532). From this moment Rabelais's life becomes a varied one of exciting adventure. Censured and pursued by the Sorbonne for his attacks on the theologians, he attached himself to influential patrons such as the Cardinal Jean du Bellay and his brother Guillaume, Seigneur de Langey, who took him on three journeys to Rome and offered him a place of refuge now at Turin, now at Metz, and finally procured him an ecclesiastical living, the cure of Meudon. In the meantime, he carried on his medical practice at intervals, returned to Montpellier in 1537 to get his doctor's degree, and fearlessly continued to add to his great *opus* in the vulgar tongue. In 1534 on his return from Rome he published *Gargantua*, which then took its place before *Pantagruel* as the beginning of the series; in 1546 after a sojourn in Poitou or his native Chinonais the *Third Book* appeared and was followed (1548) by a partial edition of the *Fourth Book*, which came out in its complete form in 1552. His death occurred late in 1553 or early in 1554, probably in Paris. Nine years later a posthumous continuation of Pantagruel's odyssey bore the title of *The Ringing Island* and finally (1564) appeared, much enlarged, as the *Fifth Book*, whose authenticity has caused so much discussion. Plattard's conclusion is that it was probably composed from Rabelais' notes and therefore at least partly by his hand.

The biographer closes his excellent study of Rabelais and analysis of his works with a rapid glance at his literary fortune both in France and abroad. After reading this life one hardly knows whether to consider Rabelais greater as a humanist or as a humorist, and one recognizes that it is just this variety of interest and breadth of grasp which makes of him the typical Renaissance figure.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

BLUE GHOST: A STUDY OF LAFCADIO HEARN *by Jean Temple* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.50)

HEARN was never at home in the world. The warped, myopic little journalist of Greek and Irish parentage violated with an almost eccentric persistence most of the social and moral codes of his generation; and it is likely that, in spite of his nostalgic longing for remote times and latitudes, he would have been no more at home in any other age or civilization. He was a spiritual outcast. Being a man of keen talent and exquisitely sensitive perceptions, he stirred up a good deal of troublesome controversy in the world which would not receive him. He left behind at his death a few scandals which have grown rather dull, some quarrels which have not yet been settled, a more or less romantic trail on three continents, and a fair quantity of intricate, perfumed, and highly figurative prose.

The temperament and constitution of the spiritual outcast present to the biographer a difficult task. Jean Temple has simplified that task as far as possible. It is perhaps inaccurate to call *Blue Ghost* a biography at all. Miss Temple has based her work entirely upon Hearn's writings and his letters, disregarding all other sources of information, and ignoring the storm of controversy which has centered around him in recent years. With only a bare skeleton of biographical material for groundwork, Miss Temple has devoted herself to tracing the tortuous development of Hearn's philosophy as a man and as an artist. The tone of her work is appreciative, rather than critical. It is marred somewhat by sentimentality, but she has brought to it, nevertheless, a fine and genuine sympathy with the temperament of her subject. There is room in the revaluation of Hearn's work for an ardent appreciation of this kind, since it has often been his fate in the past to be judged by his inferior productions.

MARGARET WALLACE

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POETRY

COLLECTED POEMS *by Edith Sitwell* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $15.00)

THE time is not long since when some of these poems were topics of eager controversy, proving to one camp of critics that the arts are rapidly going mad and to another that they are making rapid progress. Now that they are brought together so that we can see their consistency and total trend, neither of these opinions looks tenable. One must indeed learn a new idiom in order to enjoy Miss Sitwell's writing, but the bulk and brilliance of her work are now so impressive as to make the effort—certainly far less than many put forth in studying Van Gogh or Debussy—seem worth while. By mere persistence and longevity a writer may so impose his eccentricities upon the public mind as to get them accepted as characteristics. So it has been with Miss Sitwell. The reader who exerts a little patience and coöperation soon sees that what looked at first merely queer and conceited is in fact a necessary medium of expression.

This is not to say that Miss Sitwell ever approaches simplicity and directness. She belongs to the subordinate rank of artists who attract attention, and occasionally hold it, by their peculiarities. Her "idiom" is really a tissue of mannerisms, which she repeats and echoes with the same complacency in quoting and paraphrasing herself that has been seen before in those who profess greatest horror at the *cliché*. She has the mannerisms of a very modern painter. Fire to her is furry; trees and clouds are hairy; indeed almost any indefinite outline suggests to her mind something hirsute. She thickens the thin, blunts the sharp, hardens the soft, metallicizes the fluid—as in the repeated phrase "stalactites of the rain". Also she has the mannerisms of a very modern and experimental musician, changing signature at every bar, insisting to the point of deliberate cacophony upon chords not yet accepted by the ear, and for rhythms rifling the jungle.

Work of this kind, to say the least for it, avoids conventional sweetness. Miss Sitwell is aware, and leaves her reader so, that the saccharine is only one of many flavors and that eloquence is only the most obvious of several modes of intensified communication. We may feel sure, in sitting down to her poems, that we are not to drowse along the ruts of emotional symbolism that have been worn deeper every year since the time of Petrarch. We set out, rather, on an intellectual adventure, by footpaths faintly trodden through thickets of thorn. All the more on that account are we charmed by the little green pastures of loveliness that only this poet has ever found. In the midst of the "Bucolic Comedies", bristling with wit and worldliness, to come upon the cool and liquid lines in which a group of little girls mourn the death of a favorite hen and recite her virtues—this is to discover a woman in one who had seemed only a poet.

Most of Miss Sitwell's poetry suggests a certain spinsterish acerbity of mind. But not of heart. In "Troy Park", her most familiar long poem—partly because it is one of the more intelligible—we have a set of brilliant variations upon a theme as childish as "Go Tell Aunt Rosie". The mind that made them has groped and stumbled among the thorns of life, but the heart that sets the tune has remained uninstructed, unsophisticated. The clue to the explanation of all Miss Sitwell's

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art may, in fact, be simply this: that the naïve heart of a girl, for its own entertainment and to provide a tapestry that hides it from the world, has set a task for a rather learned and intricate mind, putting it up to a thousand charming *chinoiseries* and rococo artificialities, to painting all nature as a Watteau *paysage* and depicting God in a periwig. And the mind really knows nothing better to do because it considers that "this modern world is but a thin match-board flooring spread over a shallow hell".

A few readers will welcome this book for the sheer beauty of Miss Sitwell's verse and language, often at their best when she is least hampered by a meaning. Those who cannot rid themselves of the prejudice that words should always have a significance will find purport enough in the total trend of the book. The effect is that of despairing gaiety—of a half-mad and wholly sad snapping of castanets to strange new rhythms. There seem to be several ways of expressing the modern despair. There is, for example, the sound and fury of the sentimentalist and the purposeless energizing of the energetic—

> But Lily O'Grady,
> Silly and shady,
> In the deep shade is a lazy lady;
> Now Pompey's dead, Homer's read,
> Heliogabalus lost his head,
> And shade is on the brightest wing,
> And dust forbids the bird to sing.

ODELL SHEPARD

ADAMASTOR *by Roy Campbell* (DIAL PRESS. $2.50)

THIS second book by Roy Campbell comes out of England with a great flourish of trumpets; and, for once, not without reason. One had come to believe that British poets were actually what they appeared to be—the veritable rear-guard of a great and failing tradition, dying gracefully and meritoriously as ladies and gentlemen should, on their feet and with their faces toward the front: but no such weak opinion will hold up against Campbell's poetry. For what is really important in *Adamastor* is that it represents that sort of work which inevitably heralds a period of renewed poetic activity. It is crude, vigorous, original, and beautiful.

"Crude" is an expression which needs considerable qualification; one could say "unfiltered" (just as one could use "filtered" to describe much of the work of Campbell's contemporaries). For there is no prejudice nor inhibition nor acquired discipline to come between what is formed in the mind and what appears on the page. It is by no means the opposite of "austere"—there is a definite austerity in Campbell—because there is no reason why an austere poet should not communicate directly without minute critical evasions and hesitations. But it has what none of our deliberately "austere" poets have —certain obvious and arrogant faults, which I think are a sign of health and a promise of virtues to come. Campbell makes no mistakes with his words, which have a colossal vigor, a huge volume, a singular beauty:

> Where the hard rock is barren, scorched the spring,
> Shrivelled the grass, and the hot wind of death
> Hornets the crag with whirred metallic wing—

His greatest fault lies in the occasional disunity of his images. "The Albatross", for instance, one of the most ambitious poems in the book, is a series of very faintly related images, some stupendous, almost all whole in themselves and enclosed in words that are both powerful and pertinent, but treading on each other's heels with an irelevance that is both extravagant and monotonous. In this case the poem is motivated by an imagination run riot, not by a central idea; and it is an exception, if a violent one. For most of the poems in this book are completely unified, completely relevant. And what unifies them is Campbell's austerity.

Campbell is a puritan—a puritan of ideas,

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a great fighter against sentimentality; not with the cultured malice of a Father Ronald Knox, but with a clean rage, a cruel satirical laughter, directed often enough against himself. Your puritan—and particularly your puritan of morals or religion—is of course seldom austere in the true sense of the word, nor is "austere" a final judgment upon Campbell as puritan. But the element of austerity is definite, not only because—arrayed against an equally definite sensousness—it accounts for much that is unique and compelling in his imagery, but because it controls, directs, and energizes what might otherwise have been a mere spate of words. And for the puritan of ideas—

> For grazing innocence a salad
> Of lilies in the bud,
> For those who dine on words a ballad,
> For you and me a name of mud,
> A rash of stars upon the sky,
> A pox of flowers on the earth—
> To such diseases of the eye
> Habituated from our birth,
>
> We had no time for make-believe
> So early each began
> To wear his liver on his sleeve,
> To snarl and be an angry man:
> Far in the desert we have been
> Where nature still to poets kind,
> Admits no vegetable green
> To soften the determined mind . . .

there he speaks. As such he is condemned to solitude, for the South African colonial, against whom Campbell as a South African poet particularly directs his wrath, is inclined to indulge himself in syrupy emotions and to have very little use for ideas. Campbell's overwhelming scorn of men, his insistence upon solitude, might be mistaken for misanthropy, which is always a diseased and usually an unpoetical phenomenon, if he did not use his solitude, his scorn, and his pain as the channel for poetry that is at the core strictly idealistic.

And finally there is a satirical element in his poetry, which—allied with a scholarship which is always incidental, always a means and not an end—is to be found in all his most significant work. Not that Campbell is destined to be a whole-hearted satirist, for your satirist must be, if not a politician, at least a gazetteer of sorts; and that would be entirely against his inclination. Otherwise, from certain indications in his poem "A Song For The People" and elsewhere, he might easily have written a twentieth-century improvement upon *The Scourge Of Villainy*. Of the peculiar workings of this satirical element the poem "To A Young Man With Pink Eyes" is an excellent example:

> Indigenous to realms unreal
> Where such necessities are free
> As only through our wounds we feel
> And only through our tears may see,
> Through the fair garden of your mind
> Whistles the blue flight of the dove,
> A sound of bees pervades the wind
> And vegetables making love.

With its conclusion:

> For though as steel to pork impinge
> Our looks, O youth of little guile,
> Why is it I with pain who twinge,
> And you unfeelingly who smile?

The variety of Campbell's work is wide enough to include some of the mawkishness which he has made it his business to attack; and it seems not unlikely that he will continue at times, as in certain instances in *Adamastor*, to perform the unhappy miracle of turning his wine into grenadine; for it is more or less a truism that the man who attacks sentimentality is probably conscious of a rebellious sentimentality in himself. It is equally probable that there will be no diminution in his colossal energy. As to what his influence may be, there can be no telling as yet; perhaps it will be quite unimportant—perhaps his persuasive rhythms will sire a new brood of Newbolts and Quiller-Couches, or his words inspire another Barham to a new *Ingoldsby Legends*. But I cannot help

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believing that his will be an important position and an important influence. As it is he stands out now with an almost gigantic stature; and though we may still wonder whether it will eventually be the stature of a Hercules or whether the stature of a Polyphemus, heroic or monstrous, we know at least that there is hardly another British poet today who deserves the same speculation.

MISS AMERICA *by W. J. Turner* (KNOPF. $1.50)

MASS production, prohibition, marriage, divorce, education, and a critical picture of American woman in particular and of all modern women in general—these are more or less inevitable in a "satirical" poem with a title such as this. The first really important question is: what sort of woman has Mr. Turner chosen to represent Miss America? With the answer that Mr. Turner has chosen the society club-woman type; that he makes her present her own case; that, together with all the social prejudices of her class, she has a leaning toward the full and various sex-experience and finds at the age of thirty-five that she has not had nor ever will have the experience she craves—with this answer you have the content. To the second, and more important question—what sort of poem is this?—one can only answer that it is scarcely satirical and only occasionally a poem.

Mr. Turner is a poet whose many gifts and virtues nobody would wish to decry; but in *Miss America* the infrequent passages of musical and haunting poetry and the equally infrequent moments of grave and dignified beauty only serve to show that his Georgian muse had far better go on being Georgian—which is to say, anything but satirical. And if we add that he has opinions to convey which, if not very profound, are at any rate apposite—that only means that he is no fool, and we knew it before. In the matter of sex he is not without wisdom, though it is the sort of wisdom which is less than rubies; and his rather Byronic near-epigram and near-humor have their diverting moments. But the sad fact remains that Mr. Turner has little satirical talent, let alone satirical genius. For instance, it is surely pretty obvious that satirical poetry must, for its very existence, avoid any sort of relationship with prose—and yet so much of *Miss America* is prose, platitudinous prose and halting on both feet. Indeed the spectacle of Mr. Turner thus none too nimbly goating it among the satyrs is hardly a pleasant and sometimes quite a lamentable one. It could be argued that the "humble" rhymes and stumbling metre of this poem represent the speech of an intelligent but not especially literary woman—only the argument does not hold water. And if Mr. Turner thinks (for he commits himself, far, far too often, to the clumsy line as though he thought the clumsy line in satirical poetry to be not merely an occasional indulgence but an actual necessity) that he has thereby added anything to the richness of his humor, he should surely have discovered by now that the old gag of falling over one's own feet is somewhat too staled with time to amuse us any longer.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

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ESSAYS AND CRITICISM

THE TWELVE WINDED SKY *by E. L. Woodward* (R. R. SMITH. $2.50)

IN HIS recent book, *Three Studies in European Conservatism: Metternich, Guizot, the Catholic Church in the Nineteenth Century*, Mr. E. L. Woodward, a Fellow of All Souls College and Lecturer in Modern History at New College, Oxford, estimates the success of several attempts to preserve in the present ideas of a past made irrecoverable by the French Revolution and its doctrines of liberty. Although all historians must deal with the element of time, it is of especial importance for Mr. Woodward. The political method of conservatism, which is a recognized means of running order through the chaos of political life, he views as a means of establishing a continuity between the past and the future.

It is the same awareness of the indefinable force of time which makes remarkable Mr. Woodward's new book of essays, *The Twelve Winded Sky*. Here he is writing not of the Monarchy of July and the Vatican Council of 1870 as efforts to recover the past, but of things seen and heard which call up the past by their associations. Objects which most of us perceive dully as existing in space he sees with extraordinary clearness as existing in both time and space. He is, he writes, "sharply aware of the unfamiliarity of once friendly things", and this volume is the recording of images which because of their new unfamiliarity strike his consciousness with great vividness. He describes his room and thinks of the first Fellow of All Souls who occupied it and he looks from his window and watches the refacing of Queen's College library, stone for stone as its architects planned it over two hundred years ago. He drives across England, past the great stones at Avebury and Stonehenge, now over a Roman road, now taking a medieval road built on a hillside to avoid in the valley marshy ground long since drained, now over a road which carried Charles James Fox to Bath. From Oxford to London he travelled by train, and in the evening "I knocked at the Middle Temple gate from the pavement of a Roman road. Twelve hours only separated me from the Fosse Way; a fraction in the tale of hours between the end of the Roman occupation and this December night. The Middle Ages, the Tudors and Stuarts and Hanoverian England divided Roman London from the new cinemas and electric lights; yet the time cycle of English history was short, and there had been little change in the form of the rocks or the secular advance and recession of the glaciers". In another essay he describes a trip to Egypt, and after observing his fellow passengers he remarks, "One could have rewritten Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*, Theophrastus' *Characters*, Æsop's *Fables*, Gulliver's *Travels*, and the whole *Corpus* of political satire. Out of a scrutiny of this shipload, one could have gathered again the crowd which climbed the hill of Crucifixion, pieced together the story of the crusades, invented the theory of a class war". In Egypt he sees two bouquets of myrtle flowers of the time of the twentieth Egyptian dynasty. "Five hundred years before Marathon these flowers had opened; these leaves had rustled in the night wind of a hundred generations ago. . . . I knew the duration of the physical universe, the secular age of the seas and oceans, the slow levelling of the mountains;

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yet I had never felt with such suddenness the sting of death which takes from us the procession of the seasons; the immensity of our loss when our few months of spring are set against the uncounted renewal of the years."

There are many other images, some of them more commonplace than the myrtle flowers, but all are recorded with this keen sense of the mystery of time and life. Mr. Woodward never adopts the thinking of the philosopher by which even time itself becomes an abstraction, nor does he play the moralist and tell us that we must learn to live so that we can learn to die. He confesses ignorance of answers which he does not attempt to give, and speaks of "the charity of our present agnosticism which can condemn only cowardice, intolerance, cruelty, and knows few virtues other than pity and courage and steadfastness". Like another stoic he marvels at "this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire", and describes with delight its contours, at the same time finding man's place beneath the sky, no matter how stoutly he holds it, one of doubtful meaning. But the book is not an argument. It is the catching and sustaining of a mood which all of us feel at occasional incandescent moments, the almost unbearable immensity of time, and though this mood is of necessity sobering it restores for us proportions which escape us in everyday life.

THEODORE BAIRD

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU AND HIS PHILOSOPHY *by Harald Höffding* (YALE. $2.00)

ANOTHER book on Rousseau just now when he is receiving more than his share of criticism seems hardly necessary. Professor Höffding's analysis of his doctrines, moreover, could not be expected to present that much-discussed figure in a very new light, since his book first appeared in Copenhagen as long ago as 1896. Professor Höffding finds a threefold origin of Rousseau's romantic concept of nature: theological, as seen in the *Profession de foi*; natural-historical, or the argument based on the primitive "state of nature"; and psychological, spring from his own peculiar sensitivity. This confusion in great part explains the numerous contradictions into which he fell. One finds here also a quite adequate clarification of Rousseau's emphatic contrast between *amour de soi* and *amour-propre* as the underlying principles distinguishing the "state of nature" from civilized society. And like all other commentators before him, Professor Höffding enlarges upon the antithesis between sensation and thought and the consequent acceptance of the Cartesian theory of the soul and body as distinct substances. Finally after treating the main characteristics of the Rousseauistic teachings, the book ends with a sound if brief summary of his solution to the religious, social, and pedagogical problems of his day.

JUSTIN O'BRIEN

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD *by Carl Clemen and Collaborators* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $4.50)

TWELVE German "specialists"—ten professors, a museum curator, and a rabbi—are the authors of these essays on the history and the principles of sixteen religions. Their subjects range from problematic worship in prehistoric and primitive times to the post-Christian developments of Shinto and Islam. The millennia between are treated under the classification of ten "ancient national religions": Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Greek and Roman, Celtic, Teutonic, Slavic, and Japanese. The "world religions"—Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism—complete the subjects considered. The western hemisphere figures not at all in the catalogue, and only rarely are other than German sources cited in the bibliographies which follow each essay.

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Despite the omissions, doubtless necessary in a volume of less than five hundred pages, this book furnishes a summary that is adequate in all and excellent in several of its chapters. Aside from the common historical approach, the treatment varies of course with each writer. These differences occasion not only the lack of continuity (and sometimes of clarity) in style for which the translator disclaimingly apologizes, but also certain conflicts of judgment where chapter-subjects overlap, such as the reciprocal influences of Hebrew, Mithraic, and Christian practices. The chapters on Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Babylonian religion are models of exposition in both form and attitude; and that on Christianity, with its staggering bibliography of nearly two pages, a triumph of selection as well as the scholarship, although it remains much the longest of them all. Other chapters are perhaps too brief for readers with special interest, but the intention was avowedly toward the "general reader", for whose further pleasure the text has been amply and judiciously illustrated.

HANSELL BAUGH

SEVEN TYPES OF AMBIGUITY *by William Empson* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $3.00)

It is becoming rare to find a critic of poetry to whom poetic effects are the familiar ground of thought and analysis. Mr. Empson is neither an appreciator nor a publicist. He is a critic's critic. His book will be readable only to those who make out of poetry a whole world of sensibility and a chief interest in life. There are many ways, however, in which poetry can be a chief interest. Those who are most likely to read Mr. Empson with pleasure may nevertheless feel a suspicion that he is engaged very subtly in revenging himself on poetry. He is explaining to himself, perhaps, why he, or the modern man of culture, or the analytic mind, or the liberal scientist, is incapable of worshipping poetry, much as he may sympathize with it. His method is to isolate what may, from a prosaic standpoint, be regarded as vices in poetic writing; and to exhibit them as the means by which poets have gained their effects.

It is Mr. Empson's thesis that poetry succeeds by ambiguity, by the use of expressions with more than one meaning or association. He defines seven stages of "advancing logical disorder", and illustrates them from the works of English poets. If we do not press this contention hard there is plenty of evidence for it. Metaphor itself plainly makes a bridge between two concepts which are not logically connected; and it would be impossible to write poetry in words without overtones. But Mr. Empson goes further. He takes examples of loose syntax in Shakespeare's sonnets, and asserts, in effect, that their power over the reader depends on the possibility of misreading them.

Anyone who once learned to construe Latin will recall what ambiguities can conceal themselves in words. It was long before he had sufficient acquaintance with the language to exclude automatically, in a particular context, many logically possible but inappropriate meanings. Mr. Empson reverses the process. He brings us to look at the English language as if it were unfamiliar and infinitely open to be misconstrued.

An art critic might conceivably take a painting to pieces and show that one and the same fragment could be seen as part of a tree, a face, a rock or a railway train. His approach would be much the same as Mr. Empson's. The book is saved from being an essay in a kind of transcendental Baconianism by its intelligent and suave style and its flashes of humor. Mr. Edmund Blunden writes highly of it; but his praise, perhaps, smacks of naïveté. A poet would be better advised to decline support from such an uncertain ally.

ALAN PORTER

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A VARIED SHELF

GOD WITHOUT THUNDER: AN UNORTHODOX DEFENSE OF ORTHODOXY *by John Crowe Ransom* (HARCOURT, BRACE. $3.50)

MR. RANSOM has written some of the best contemporary American poetry; he was one of the "Fugitive" poets of Tennessee, and more recently he has been connected with the back-to-the-soil movement of certain Southern men of letters. The present book, his first prose work, shows the concreteness and vitality of language which he probably owes to his labors as a poet. Moreover, it has the unpretentious honesty and reality of his other utterances. But his argument, when he attempts to defend it logically, becomes confusing. This makes it very difficult to do him justice in a short notice.

Mr. Ransom says, explaining the intention of the book, "I might undertake to explain . . . the function of the myths in human civilization". It develops that this is the same thing, for him, as "defending orthodoxy"; and orthodoxy he defines as follows: "Orthodoxy—the religion which now is losing in the Western World—is therefore such a religion as that of the Eastern or Orthodox Church. Perhaps a little less it is that of the Roman and Anglican Churches, and perhaps still less that of several non-conformist communions". In his defence of this orthodoxy, Mr. Ransom contrasts the pale theology of modernism with the rich myths of the Old Testament; he attacks the modern religion of science, both as an explanation of the universe and as a basis, in industrialism, for society; and finally he proposes the myth (elaborately defined) as a better basis for a cosmology than scientific principles.

These indications will show that Mr. Ransom cuts a very wide swath. In fact, his field is so vast, so thorny, and, in a way, so unexplored, that one could hardly hope to establish much there short of a dozen volumes. The development of Christian doctrine, Bible exegesis, the history and metaphysics of science, the structure and culture of industrial and agricultural societies, are only some of the subjects he touches. When he comes to explain what myths are for him he delves boldly into modern philosophy, especially the philosophies of Kant and Bergson. In discussing scientific modernism he takes up arms against the writers on popular science and the liberal "modern" churchmen. All of this is, of course, confusing: it would be difficult to construct an organized defence of any such large thesis by means of the various bits of recent thinking that Mr. Ransom found to hand. But to reproach him for not being a systematic thinker would be to miss the point of his extremely interesting and stimulating work.

Mr. Ransom is more of a preacher or exhorter than philosopher or theologian. He says at once, "This work of mine is mere lay work, and meant for laity". Though Mr. Ransom is a defender of tradition, he is not in the position of an Eliot, who accepts an already established church. Though he wants orthodoxy, he is not like the Catholics who re-expound Thomism to the modern world. He is a layman without a church urging the rest of us, his fellow laymen, to see the necessity of a church. The great value and originality of his work lies in his frank acceptance of this dilemma, with all that it implies, including the necessity of purging the atmosphere of the biologists and business-men who

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would make religion over in their image. One may question his tactics, doubt whether his method of defence is a good one. Perhaps he further laicizes an already lay religion. But it is certain that a poet has as good a right in this domain as the Rotarians, and it is very heartening to find an American poet so firmly grounded that he can claim a stake in his country's institutions.

Moreover, his poet's sensibility makes him almost unique among American writers on such topics. The best part of the book is the section called "Satan as Science", wherein Mr. Ransom interprets the myth of the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in terms of the modern scientific religion. He takes the account in Genesis as a text for a sermon, almost as a Fundamentalist preacher might, but of course with a far wider culture behind him. It is here that he comes nearest to realizing his avowed purpose: to find a religion "with the sanction of his own natural society behind it" to which he may "by personal conviction be intensely loyal, with Gods whom he may fear and love, and whose commandments represent for him the deepest wisdom". It is here that his perception serves us all best; for the religion Mr. Ransom discovers in himself, with its heavy reliance on Milton and the Old Testament, is the one nearest the spiritual roots of most of us, whether we like it or not.

FRANCIS FERGUSSON

MORALS OF TOMORROW *by Ralph W. Sockman* (HARPERS. $2.50)

"THE happy man is he who achieves a harmonized expression of all his desires." In this definition is well indicated Dr. Sockman's general point of view toward those natural urges which have in the past been generally met by commands for suppression. Though a minister of the Methodist church, Dr. Sockman would lead no one to infer it from his treatment of these urges; and, indeed, his mild preference for Jesus as an ethical teacher would seem the only element in his position common to the orthodox Christian of an earlier generation. He is almost wholly rationalistic in his method; he accepts all scientific knowledge; and though he feels that some mystical faith is an aid to grace, he is content to call its object—adopting Professor Babbitt's term—a Higher Will, not a personal God. He is so entirely the reasonable and eclectic scholar of the thought of his time that he will say: "Going out to combat the subtle iniquities of our corporate life with merely the personal moral codes of a premachine age is as futile as attempting to fight poison gas and aerial raids with the armor of a Don Quixote". And he answers in the affirmative the vital question: "Can we learn experimental flexibility from the spirit of science without sacrificing the basic faith which gives dynamic?" Under the circumstances it is surprising that among his host of references there is none to John Dewey, and but one book of his listed in the bibliography. At all events, there have been changes in the Methodist church!

Morals of Tomorrow is learned, witty, free from controversial sharpness, persuasive and amiable. It is not deeply original, being in a good sense a popular presentation of contemporary ethical thought from a well-stocked file of notes. To one who prefers the stylistic austerity of great ethical writers Dr. Sockman's punning proclivities may seem rather out of place. A slight impatience with this manifestly sincere and eminently reasonable work can be accounted for, perhaps, not only by its style, which improves as the author progresses, but also by that very reasonableness which enables him always to admit there is much to be said on both sides. He agrees with the humanist in objecting to mere naturalism; but he feels the desirability of supernatural sanctions. He recognizes the need of expressing natural impulse; but points out the dangers of excess. He argues that modern conditions require new ethics;

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but concludes that after all the best guide to them lived two thousand years ago. Doubtless this impartiality is more praiseworthy than uncompromising partizanship, but unfortunately the latter makes a greater appeal to the unregenerate tastes of a reader.

This conciliatory treatment seldom rouses opposition, certainly. But a few questions suggest themselves. If all supernatural dogmas of Christianity are abandoned, why should Dr. Sockman urge the ethics of Jesus so exclusively, and not take more fully into account the best thought of Greece and the Orient? Is it really true, as he declares, that Jesus took the "pagan virtues" for granted? Dr. Sockman declares humanism inadequate without a supernatural faith; but how, from his position, can he logically urge one? And finally, does not his concern with the new problems of a mechanized civilization tend toward ignoring the enduring unity of human nature? After all, what is new is not principles but applications. Dr. Sockman's slighting reference to the mere "personal moral codes of a pre-machine age" seems to imply that he mistakes the nature of ethical laws. They are not, as he himself truly says, legal rules; but they are principles of general action, the particular application of which must be adapted to circumstances. And these principles, because contained in human nature itself, have hardly altered with the increasing complexity of their application.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

THE DRY DECADE *by Charles Merz* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $3.00)

THIS equable, scholarly history of ten years of prohibition could hardly have been more timely. We are faced with a situation in which prohibition, backed by a constitutional amendment, is rapidly becoming the paramount issue of the day. Our late dazzling prosperity has collapsed—at least temporarily. The power issue has a limited popular appeal. The efforts toward world peace and limitation of armaments have ended in what amounts to complete fiasco. There is no great leader; no strong labor movement or new political movement; no other burning issue to captivate the American mind. In the minds of millions of Americans prohibition crowds every other state problem out of the limelight. I recommend this book as one to be read by everyone. It is not a series of delightful essays critical of American life as was Mr. Merz's *The Great American Band Wagon*. It contains only rare flashes of his gift for quiet, skilful, ironic analysis of social conditions. It is a straight out-and-out history, full of citations, reciting chapter and verse, a clearing house for opposing sets of statistics, claims and counterclaims; it is a thoroughgoing study, impartial in manner, of the sad efforts of an unenthusiastic government to impose a reform on people, a vast majority of whom in the more important states will not tolerate it.

Mr. Merz is, of course, an anti-prohibitionist. But he presents the principles, arguments, and statistics put forth by the anti-saloon league, and other dry organizations, fairly and at length. To me he seems to lean backward in his effort to be impartial. The conclusions that force themselves on the intelligent reader's mind, however, are that the present situation is intolerable and that there remains only a quixotic hope of getting out of it by strictly legal methods.

We see the whole picture. The underworld grows rich on the profits of one of our great industries which we have obligingly turned over to it—outside the pale of the law. Legislators pussyfoot, vote dry but cut prohibition appropriations to the quick. All our cities openly nullify the law with practical impunity. People are poisoned by vile liquor. The courts become so overcrowded that they are forced to decree bargain days in order to clear the calendars. A rotten, fishy smell of corruption trails the work of enforcement. And public servants are turned into sneaks, liars, killers, drunk-

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ards, seducers of men and women, grafters, blackmailers, in pursuance of their duties as prohibition agents. Study the record. Because, I imagine, Mr. Merz is so deeply in earnest, because he hopes his ultra-conservative work will impress honest drys, people of sense and sensibility, he makes no lurid charges, he does not argue about personal liberty, he does not offer a substitute plan, nor does he make sensational accusations or repeat old ones. His book, to paraphrase the title of Professor Irving Fisher's pro-prohibition volume, might be called "Prohibition at Its Best". Perhaps in this review I should be as temperate as he is. As an opponent of prohibition he has tied his right hand behind his back and given the enemy the first three blows. Even so the cause of tolerance wins, but not without a struggle. Read the book, and read it at leisure, every word of it.

FRED T. MARSH

BUT IT STILL GOES ON *by Robert Graves* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.50)

HAVING said goodbye to all that, Mr. Robert Graves takes up his reflections once more in a volume contrarily entitled *But It Stills Goes On*. It is an engaging and miscellaneous collection of smaller literary matters, intended to serve, in part at least, as a sort of postscript or appendix to the autobiography. *But It Still Goes On,* as a single production, quite defies classification. One can only indicate something of its nature by telling what it contains.

First there is a body of material relating directly to *Goodbye to All That*. Mr. Graves tells something of how he came to write the autobiography, and of the methods he pursued in its writing; he corrects a few factual errors and defends certain of his controversial statements, and he replies to several letters from persons who were also witnesses of the events he recorded. Next, he prints three short stories whose subject matter places them in more or less the same autobiographical category. Two of them, while slender as to material, are extraordinary in character, and are, like most of Mr. Graves's writing, very entertaining. The third, "The Shout", is a curious, distorted, half-mystical narrative, very ingenious in its conception, and almost inexcusable in its tantalizing confusion.

The second section of the book is entitled "A Journal of Curiosities". In the form of a diary, Mr. Graves has set down, mainly as a matter of literary exercise, the brief reflections and odd notions which occurred to him, from time to time, on every subject under heaven—from feminine word-endings to the life of the Emperor Claudius. Since Mr. Graves commands a crisp prose style and a very agile mind, these small quips and suggestions for essays make extremely amusing reading. The last section of the book is a three-act play from which the volume takes its title. It is a long play, and, from the point of view of practical dramatic writing, rather an amateurish one. According to the publishers, it presents to the post-war generation "an anti-Byronic type of hero for which it has long been looking". That is, in Mr. Graves's more direct English, the hero, David, has no romantic feelings for people of the opposite sex, nor has Charlotte, the heroine. Possibly Mr. Graves has never committed to paper a literary production as dull and uninformed as this one. Almost certainly he has never before offended so grievously the canons of ordinary good taste.

MARGARET WALLACE

EUROPE AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR *by Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $4.00)

AN inquest held long after the event is this volume representing in uneven parts the researching of student writers, Mr. Jordan at Harvard and Mr. Pratt at Oxford, the former furnishing seven chapters and the latter four; both uniting in the conclusion. Primarily they were brought together by Pro-

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fessor S. E. Morison, who persuaded them to rewrite and join their essays to which he furnishes a kindly foreword. They have compiled a careful survey of the European attitude toward North and South in the great struggle, of the specific merits of which there was in Britain, at least, small appreciation. When President Lincoln, acting on Secretary Seward's advice, shifted the conflict on the part of the North as one to save the Union, Lord Russell put it prettily that the contention was on "one side for empire and on the other for independence". Indeed the North and South had been making faces at each other so long that it was hard for the sensible English to believe they would really come to blows. When war began the news seldom caught up with opinion. The breaking of the Atlantic cable after its first message was a misfortune that might have had serious consequences. William Howard Russell's account of Bull Run in the London *Times* was accepted as showing that the North did not know how to fight and his expulsion from the country gave him a chance to take the lecture platform to express the view that the North could not win, which had much weight. Then when the blockade became effective there was a disposition to take some action in the way of recognition that would restore the cotton supply and set the idle looms humming in Lancashire. The *Trent* incident led to much fulminating when coupled with Secretary Seward's aggressive attitude. Liverpool ship-owners had a vivid memory of the prowess of American privateers in past wars and Lincoln's taking the matter in hand ended the incident. There too, was a healthy fear that the North might decide to capture Canada. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation cleared the air; the Emancipation Society started its Exeter Hall movement in support of the North. Then victory perched on the Union banners with its customary soothing effect. Interesting, indeed is the revelation of the first press agent, Henry Motze, a clever Swiss employed by the Confederacy, who, with James Spence, an Englishman with experience in America, did much to influence the public. The true state of things was hard to establish, with poor news facilities in the South and an editorial opinion that was largely anti-North. The position of the other countries was of no great importance, though Louis Napoleon tried hard to secure joint recognition for the Confederate States. He complicated matters with his invasion of Mexico. Spain was not unaware that a successful South might mean the loss of Cuba. Russia, busy with despoiling Poland of liberty, took the Northern end, keeping well disposed fleets in the harbors of New York and San Francisco, ostensibly "visiting", but in reality prepared for contingencies. The South, it is noted, had a more "gentlemanly" representation in England than had the North and this was not without effect. The chief factor in Uncle Sam's favor was that he was judged impracticable and sure to smash himself if left alone.

Tennyson, be it made known, was pro-Southern, but liked the threnody of Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and was wont to hum it to himself!

DON C. SEITZ

ST. VITUS DAY *by Stephen Graham* (APPLETON. $2.50)

THE mood that characterizes the works of a Stepniak, a Savinkov, a Tolstoy pervades the pages of *St. Vitus Day*. It is the story of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, by Gavro Princip, a high school lad, in 1914. With a poignancy, an epic sweep that is like the flow of time, the author recreates the brief career of the principal hero of the curtain-raiser that preceded the world's most cruel and most pointless tragedy. Thanks to the diligent researches and vivid telling of Stephen Graham we learn of the Sarajevo murder as the culmination of an intricate network of errors and contingencies. To think, for example, that

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the seed of the greatest carnage in history lay in the merest accident of a chauffeur making a wrong turn because he had not been told of the change in the route originally decided upon, and thus inadvertently bringing the royal target close to the one unerring hand that had been itching for another chance to release the bullets, after it had once missed its opportunity!

St. Vitus Day is true, objective, verified history, such as has not been written in two decades. It is also drama that is the despair of historians. For this reason none of the works of authors delving into contemporary records to retrace the first moves in the stupendous conflict that almost destroyed civilization is likely to be more serviceable or more keenly enjoyed.

LOUIS RICH

TAMBO AND BONES: A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN MINSTREL STAGE *by Carl Wittke* (DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS. $2.50)

TO TRACE the curious growth of the American Minstrel Show, with its imitations and caricatures of the Negro, is a complicated and difficult task. For this hybrid institution had the joke-book Negro and ordinary vaudeville skits in its make-up; and the companies were numerous and the roster of famous performers very long. Professor Wittke has made his way through the vast and frequently unreliable mass of material with a fair degree of success, although his book does not entirely escape the air of the catalogue, so common to works on the American stage. *Tambo and Bones* has, at least, the virtue of being straightforward and scholarly in an unpedantic fashion. Its greatest value will probably be as a reference work for the names of actors, companies and other purely documentary matters; and the foot-notes to the volume form a good bibliography of minstrelsy. The book's analytical portion are rather superficial; nowhere near so thorough as the shorter account in James Weldon Johnson's *Black Manhattan*. Professor Wittke has not gone very deeply into the reasons for the great popularity of this uniquely American form of entertainment, nor into the causes that underlay its decline. One regrettable omission is a clear delineation of the Negro's real part in the Minstrel.

ZUÑI FOLK TALES *collected and translated by Frank Hamilton Cushing* (KNOPF. $5.00)

THIS reprinted volume of tales gathered by Cushing among the Zuñi Indians of New Mexico carries a new introduction by Mary Austin. The introduction's somewhat tart language recounts the career of Frank H. Cushing and attempts, very sanely, to place the stories in their proper category as popular literature arising from a definite and intricately developed culture. Miss Austin points out the obvious literary intentions of the stories and is suspicious of their value as ethnological documents. Though they are related, she tells us, to a vast Creation Myth current among the Zuñi, these tales must be taken largely as creations of their authors' imaginations and not too literally as case records of Indian beliefs.

Whatever value they may have for ethnology, as literature the tales are uneven in quality. The best of them, like "The Youth and His Eagle" or "The Warrior Suitor of Moki", are simple and direct and have a definite form, which may be inherent in them or may be owing entirely to the translator. But the formal unity seems principally to be achieved through concentration on a single character. The interplay of motive and action in these characters is not subtle; still it is complex enough to sustain the stories. Too many of the tales are, on the other hand, repetitious and amorphous, and the studied unsophistication of the volume tends to become tedious.

EUGENE ARMFIELD

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CORONADO'S CHILDREN *by J. Frank Dobie* (SOUTHWEST PRESS. $3.00)

NEARLY four hundred years ago the Spaniard Francisco Vasquez Coronado, fired by a strange tale, fitted out a great expedition for the quest of El Dorado, or the Gilded King, and for the legendary Seven Cities of Cibola. Dreaming of a place "where ordinary dishes were made of wrought plate and the jugs and bowls were of gold", he rode a thousand miles across unknown mountains and parched plains to find a handful of naked savages squatting under wind-whisked thatches or skulking at the heels of drifting buffaloes. Coronado's fate has been the usual fate of what Mr. Dobie calls Coronado's children. For four hundred years the legends of the New World, in contrast to those of the Old, have been mainly about great wealth to be found, the wealth of secret mines and hidden treasures.

Mr. Dobie's book is the story, or rather twenty stories, about the quest for El Dorado in various forms, especially in Texas and the adjacent states. Adventurous man, ever the dreamer, has been sacrificing comfortable reality for the lure of the mirage. In the gold rush of 1851 two miners were taking three hundred dollars a day each out of Rich Gulch on the West Branch of Feather River. But hearing of a fabulous Gold Lake, they left their paying claims and spent months and all the money they had in searching for the imaginary lake. A curious belief of the gold-rush days was that the rich supply of gold would soon make the metal valueless. So instead of saving their money they prefered to spend it riotously while it was still "worth something".

Gold was not the only metal discovered by accident. In 1545 an Indian hunter was chasing a goat on a mountain in Bolivia. In order to pull himself over a ledge he caught hold of a bush. The bush came out by the roots, disclosing masses of silver. Thus were discovered what for centuries have been the world-famous silver mines of Potosi. In the mining West, coyotes and burros seem to have directed more prospectors to "pay" than all the practical geologists combined. In 1859 "Pancake" Comstock, a half-witted prospector, saw "some queer-looking stuff" in a gopher hole. He ran his hand down and scooped out dirt sprinkled with gold and silver. The great Comstock lode was located.

The sheer romance of the quest goes back to days of belief in the Gilded King, sought by the Spaniards in the south, and by the French voyagers in the north in a land that they called Norembega. The Gilded King, according to the story, had attendants to anoint his body every morning with oil and then to blow gold dust upon him. Every sunrise he was freshly robed in gold plating. To find the Gilded King for more than a hundred years the *conquistadores* marched and countermarched from one extremity of South America to the other, spending the lives of thousands upon thousands of men and the wealth of prodigal treasures.

ARTHUR BARTLETT MAURICE

ON THE RIM OF THE WILDERNESS *by Maurice Samuel* (LIVERIGHT. $2.50)

THIS study of the conflict in Palestine is very definitely the presentation of the Jewish point of view by an informed, authoritative writer who endeavors very successfully to place what is generally considered "an ugly little quarrel between two peoples" on an entirely new plane. He sees Palestine as a cosmos in miniature where on the rim of the wilderness the age-old struggle of the old and the new is being fought out in a clash of life-forces which far transcend the nationalism involved.

Mr. Samuel's sympathies are naturally with the Jew as representative of modern forces, not only material but social and intellectual, and it is the thesis of his book that the best interests of the Arab people will be promoted by an alliance with the Jews rather

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than continued subservience to their own leaders. His attack upon the Arab Executive is devastating. He declares it has no actual interest in the *fellaheen* except as exploiting their suffering may be politically useful, that it has done virtually nothing for them, and that it has no conception of what nationalism really means as an awakening of popular energy. It is the Jews who are responsible for what little improvement there has been in the *fellaheen's* condition of living; their own leaders bear down on them heavily.

Mr. Samuel makes out a strong case backed by a mass of evidence. His book is clear, straightforward, interesting and highly provocative. Yet there is no criticism of Jewish activities to offset that of the Arab leaders, no examination of the part England plays in this complex problem, and his complete subordination of the issue of nationalism to that of social organization is not altogether convincing. The antagonism of the Arabs to the Jews cannot be completely disposed of by holding the Arab leaders wholly responsible for it. It may well be that the economic and social lot of the *fellaheen* would be greatly improved by closer association with the Jewish immigrants and that the Arab Executive represents itself rather than the people for whom it supposedly speaks, but nevertheless the course Mr. Samuel favors would be Jewish domination of Palestine. This is neither a practical nor necessarily a desirable solution of the problem.

THE CHANGING FABRIC OF JAPAN *by Captain M. D. Kennedy* (R. R. SMITH. $4.50)

IN THIS sober, well-informed, judicious account of recent changes in Japan which is largely confined to the politico-economic sphere, Captain Kennedy is by no means oblivious of more subtle changes in Japanese life and philosophy, but it is on such topics as labor and social unrest, the growth of representative government, the Japanese press and its influence, religious forces and their political bearing, that he concentrates. If there is nothing very new in what he writes, his book is nevertheless a worth-while summary of the forces now operating in Japan. His comment on the rapidity with which Japan continues to alter its national life is illustrated by reservations which would already have to be made to his treatment of the Privy Council. Since Captain Kennedy wrote (early in 1930) its influence has suffered a severe check in the successful fight of the government on ratification of the London Naval Treaty. The Privy Council originally opposed this pact and representative government gained a victory which may have far-reaching results.

Perhaps the most interesting sections of the book are those dealing with State Shintoism and the Japanese press. On the post-war shift in Japan's foreign policy Captain Kennedy is both clear and succinct. But in pointing out the factors which forced Japan into a policy of industrialization with its concomitant of friendly international relations, he gives no indication of how it can be expected to solve Japan's major problem of excess population.

THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF SOVIET RUSSIA *by Calvin B. Hoover* (MACMILLAN. $3.00)

IN ALL of today's books on Soviet Russia—and their number is legion—the question we are most interested to have answered concerns the effect of the Five Year Plan on national morale. Its success from the purely economic point of view must be gauged by production statistics for whose authenticity we have no guarantee. What matters is whether the tremendous sacrifices which the Communists demand of the present for the sake of the future entail a burden heavier than the Russian people can continue to bear. It is obvious that if the enthusiasm of the Communists and the passivity of the

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peasants allow more time for economic experimentation, the present Five Year Plan will give way to another and living conditions will gradually improve, while if present hardships become unbearable a breaking point will be reached which may mean collapse of the Communist State.

On this point Professor Hoover believes, as a result of careful studies, that, frightful as conditions now are, the Soviet economic system will surmount the food crisis and thereby prove its stability. He has found the standard of living at a new low ebb, a general feeling of dissatisfaction and bitterness to be prevalent almost everywhere, and believes that if the matter could be put to a free vote a majority of the population of Russia would favor a return to the Tsarist régime in preference to the present one. He sees many dangers in the Communist future. Nevertheless he discounts the probability of a crash and with the present crisis passed believes that the Soviet Union will be a definite threat to the capitalist world, and that unless we greatly improve our technique of marketing and distribution the world revolution will begin to make rapid strides.

It is not altogether fair to single out an author's conclusions when the bulk of his book constitutes a careful and lucid examination of every phase of Communist economic activity from agriculture to social insurance, but in studies of Russia this is inevitable. Professor Hoover has returned from his tour of inspection with opinions that challenge attention. Even though we may feel that he is sometimes too certain in his statements, they cannot be ignored.

ARABIA *by H. St. J. B. Philby* (SCRIBNER'S. $5.00)

IT IS NOT fair to say that Mr. Philby does not give us full warning. In his preface to this study of modern Arabia he states that he has made the work of a certain Arabic historian the basis of his earlier chapters "and followed him through the somewhat dreary record of the early struggles of Wahhabi puritanism at the risk of wearying my readers". But it was an ill-advised move. The risk was even greater than the author could have realized and the endless succession of names, dates and facts with which the greater part of his book is packed soon becomes completely meaningless to the general reader. Furthermore, in the other books of this excellent series on the modern world, in which *Arabia* is the fourteenth volume, we have become accustomed to having the background set forth with reference not only to historical development but to social and economic evolution. Mr. Philby, however, touches so little upon actual conditions of life in the desert that no very clear picture of modern Arabia ever emerges from his account of its tribal warfare. Nor can one other criticism be avoided. His spelling of names unquestionably conforms to the latest rules of transliterating Arabic into English, but again for the general reader, to whom this series is addressed, it is highly discouraging to thread one's way through a factual maze in which the few Arabic names which are familiar always appear strangely disguised. Even the *Koran* becomes the *Quran*.

In the later chapters dealing with the rise of the second Wahhabi Empire and the dramatic career of 'Abdul 'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, the book becomes distinctly more interesting. Mr. Philby communicates to its page some of the enthusiasm he feels for this great Arab leader, whose empire building is a little-known phenomenon of our own day, and gives a clear and concise account of events in Arabia during and since the World War. In his estimation of the rôle played by Colonel Lawrence, his characterizations of the members of the Sharifian dynasty, his summary of Arabian politics today, and his writing—perhaps somewhat too eulogistic—on Ibn Sa'ud, he atones to considerable degree for the first half of the book.

FOSTER RHEA DULLES

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WHEN THE DALTONS RODE *by Emmett Dalton* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

IN THE nineties the Dalton gang was figuring dramatically and realistically in the newspapers of the day. They were blamed for every bank robbery and train hold-up. Railroad companies offered rewards for them, dead or alive, and tried to ambush them with smoking cars filled with deputies armed to the teeth. Private detectives lurked on their trail hoping for the glory of their capture. False friends plotted to betray them for the rewards. They even ate their meals, except when in the safety of their dug-out, with their rifles across their knees, for they trusted no one but each other. They knew and avoided the fate of the James boys and the Youngers, who were related by blood as well as by the similarity of their exploits, and they survived because of their shrewdness and caution. They were aided by Eugenia Moore, Bob Dalton's sweetheart and a proficient telegrapher, who was able to loiter around railroad and telegraph stations and pick up messages dealing with shipments of gold and currency. Eventually they were shot down to a man in the famous Coffeyville street-fight, when they attempted to rob two banks simultaneously and an aroused citizenry showered them with lead. There were more casualties per shots fired in that exchange than in any battle of the Civil War, according to a veteran officer who was present. The title-page gives Mr. Jack Jungmeyer as collaborator with Emmett Dalton in *When the Daltons Rode*, and we suspect that it is to him that the reader owes consistent dramatization and a unified narrative, as well as the restraint of the romantic love stories of Eugenia Moore and Julia Johnson, which, without detracting from the historic and picturesque value of this account of early gunmen, make it fit reading for those who merely seek entertainment. The old West really lives here as well in description of country as in characterization.

ROBERT L. ROE

THE GENTEEL FEMALE: AN ANTHOLOGY *edited by Clifton J. Furness* (KNOPF. $3.50)

Now that we paste illustrations from *Godey's Lady's Book* on our lampshades, we might well review the times when those frail but exceedingly powerful females determined the social and literary trend of the whole country. This book of extracts from contemporary material discloses our ancestress as she was and as she wanted to be. Fainting, hoop-skirts, pathetic poems on tombstones, elocution methods with Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene, lap-dogs, the language of flowers, specimens of elegant letters: they are all here to be wondered at. The book in fact greatly resembles the *Keepsakes* and *Friendship's Annuals* of the period. And though now we cannot clasp our hands and raise our eyes to heaven, these choice bits will be found just as alluring. Since however, this is a volume in the *Americana Deserta* series, there is a long and very excellent introduction by the editor as well as running comments on the excerpts. Undoubtedly it is a sociological work of some importance. Fortunately it is also overwhelmingly funny.

PAUL ALLEN

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FLEDGLING FICTION

ADVANCE SPRING STYLES

THAT contradictory impulse which makes the British the most inveterate of colonists and wanderers and among the most nostalgic of peoples, is the theme of two of the first novels of the month. *Dark Heritage* by Shirland Quin (Little, Brown. $2.50) is really a story of the dual aspects of the impulse at war with one another. It is the story of Mervyn Morgan, who runs away from his Welsh home to America, there to build a fortune. But always his passionate love for his childhood home stands in the way of any permanent settlement in the New World. He is an adventurer, an exile, and even though absorption in business and in marriage divert him, he lives in preparation for his return home. Eventually he does return, but meanwhile, America, which he has so casually tenanted, has shaped him to its own standards, so that he finds himself again an exile, cheated by years of illusory living of a contentment he might long ago have achieved.

Such, in brief, is the theme of this excellent novel; but I do it scant justice by merely baring its skeleton. In Miss Quin's hands it has achieved a rounded form, a satisfying fulness, which make it at once emotionally and intellectually satisfying. The chapters describing Mervyn's early life are particularly well done. The Morgan family is shown in living variety; the busy life of the farm, the conflicting natures of the younger Morgans, the almost worshipful immersion of the self in the family and the family property, are given full value. The long account of Mervyn's adventures in America is less successful, for it lacks the warmth that is found in the prologue. Mervyn follows a not unfamiliar path; day-laborer, odd-job man, dining-car steward, farmer—and then, by a fluke, the successful advertising man: such a course parallels fact too closely to be incredible, yet always in fiction there is the ring of incredibility about it. But if Mervyn's material progress is unconvincing his spiritual unease is real enough. That hunger for his own country that animates his life is always evident although never over-stressed. So his marriage, unfortunate in itself, fails doubly in not assuaging his nostalgia. So business becomes a voluntary obsession, success is pursued as a substitute for contentment, and, after Mervyn's marriage ends in divorce, a more suitable love is consciously evaded lest it rival his more urgent passion for home.

It is inevitable that the home-coming, which in itself is an anti-climax, should be unsatisfying. Disillusionment, since it partakes of a weariness of spirit, can never be the stuff of active tragedy, and it is perhaps from the reader that comes that sense of flatness which characterizes the last section of the book. Yet I think that here the book itself fails to live up to its highest level. It is to this return that the whole story has been directed and now, when it should reach its peak, the discovery that Mervyn is himself a stranger, not only in the eyes of his old neighbors, but in those of his family and within himself, should be brought out with a poignancy that is not in the text. But that is a debatable point. Apart from it, there is good stuff in the book: the mark of careful thought and workmanship; a consistent grasp of character, and a narrative well handled.

The exiled spirit is dealt with in somewhat different fashion in John Fisher's *The Un-*

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certain Traveler (Morrow. $2.00), a book at once more slender and more flavorsome than *Dark Heritage*. Frank Bentley, the traveller of the title, is a younger son, who, drawn by a girl's attraction into an enthusiasm for the *Risorgimento*, goes to Italy with the intention of joining Garibaldi and fighting for Italian independence. A drunken evening and a consequent broken leg intervene and, after months of inactivity, he returns to London to report to the girl the death of her brother and his own failure. Now, uprooted, he turns to America, seeking the contentment that is denied him at home. A chance encounter sends him on the overland trail to California, and on this journey he meets another girl who again deflects his course, so that California gold is abandoned in favor of a settler's life in Oregon.

There is a convention among publishers that stories of pioneer life must be described as "sagas". Another convention prescribes that any novel dealing with life in the West, unless it be the traditional cowboy "Western" is perforce a work of literary merit, however shoddy it may be in fact. *Kin* by Vahrah von Klopp (Dodd, Mead. $2.00) is a saga which, by the aforementioned test, at least, achieves literary excellence. In fact, it is a moderately competent story of the lives of a family of outlaws in the California of the seventies and after, which contains one exceedingly vivid character, Ellen Vail, whose vitality prevents the book from being wholly commonplace.

Another novel which escapes being melodrama by virtue of its honesty of characterization is *Johnny Bogan* by Leonora Baccante (Vanguard. $2.00). Here the son of the village shoemaker, orphaned and outcast because his father has murdered a shrewish wife, enters into a liaison with a girl of the respectable society of the town. When she dismisses him, he drifts into a flirtation with her sister, and in revenge against the other girl, marries her. His infatuation for Cathy Willis, his frenzied misery in marriage with Sophy, the steps by which his marriage and his life come to a violent and tragic failure, are employed effectively in the development of what should be a long short story, rather than the somewhat diluted novel the author has made of it.

A few months ago I commented upon *The Back-to-Backs*, a novel which portrayed life in an English mining village. Now comes another book to add its picture of sordidness and misery to the evidence. In *Darkness at Noon* (Liveright. $2.50), Harry Carlisle tells of Red Shean, the gigantic, the timid, whose rebellion against the back-breaking slavery of the mines leads him into a fleshly servitude to his barmaid wife.

Less brutal than *The Back-to-Backs*, it is fully as convincing and perhaps more moving. The background of the book, the portrayal of the men at work, is capitally done. The characters, however, are superficial portraits; Red, himself, has something of life in him, but the others are vaguely outlined.

To remember childhood accurately, to recall early happenings with fresh detail and to refrain from injecting into the recollections some adult interpretation, is to perform a rare feat. This Grace Stone Coates has done in *Black Cherries* (Knopf. $2.50), a series of sketches exquisite in texture and so faithful to the childish mind that one derives a warm impression of the imagined young narrator. In these tender, vivid incidents the child's dim comprehension plays upon the event recounted, narrating, interpreting, the happenings in a family whose common happiness is defeated by the father's immersion in grief for his dead first wife. It is the child who records with unabashed vision whatever comes before it; at no time is there hint of an older, alien commentator. But the adult eyes viewing these childish revelations reads into them the subtle implications which by their very indirectness gain in intensity. This is admirable work, not alone because of the technical skill which produced it but for the moving quality of the material itself.

GUY HOLT

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THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

What do people want to read? Good stories, yes; but after that? High adventure, if you leave it to me. Dick Byrd's book about the Antarctic jumps up to second place in the general list; watch it go higher. But it is a safe bet that Yeats-Brown's "The Lives of a Bengal Lancer" will continue in popularity just as long. It is a rare combination of a story of high adventure, in the truest sense, with writing of a quality not always found in modern literature. People—book readers—are as much interested in what goes on inside of a man's skull as they are in his fortitude in carrying that skull to the corners of the earth. So they still read "The Conquest of Happiness" as eagerly as they do "The Mysterious Universe".

NOVELS

1. ANGEL PAVEMENT	*J. B. Priestley*	HARPERS
2. PHILIPPA	*Anne Douglas Sedgwick*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
3. THE DEEPENING STREAM	*Dorothy Canfield*	HARCOURT, BRACE
4. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS	*Louis Bromfield*	STOKES
5. YEARS OF GRACE	*Margaret Ayer Barnes*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
6. SEED	*Charles G. Norris*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
7. CAKES AND ALE	*W. Somerset Maugham*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
8. WATERS UNDER THE EARTH	*Martha Ostenso*	DODD, MEAD
9. ON FORSYTE 'CHANGE	*John Galsworthy*	SCRIBNER'S
10. CIMARRON	*Edna Ferber*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
11. LAUGHING BOY	*Oliver La Farge*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
12. BLOWING CLEAR	*Joseph C. Lincoln*	APPLETON

GENERAL

1. THE STORY OF SAN MICHELE	*Axel Munthe*	DUTTON
2. LITTLE AMERICA*	*Richard Byrd*	PUTNAM
3. THE GREEN PASTURES	*Marc Connelly*	FARRAR & RINEHART
4. THE ADAMS FAMILY	*James Truslow Adams*	LITTLE, BROWN
5. THE LIVES OF A BENGAL LANCER*	*Major F. Yeats-Brown*	VIKING
6. HUMANITY UPROOTED	*Maurice Hindus*	CAPE & SMITH
7. THE CONQUEST OF HAPPINESS	*Bertrand Russell*	LIVERIGHT
8. MARY BAKER EDDY	*Lyman P. Powell*	MACMILLAN
9. LONE COWBOY	*Will James*	SCRIBNER'S
10. THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE*	*Sir James Jeans*	MACMILLAN
11. ASTROLOGY: YOUR PLACE AMONG THE STARS	*Evangeline Adams*	DODD, MEAD
12. THE MEANING OF CULTURE	*John Cowper Powys*	NORTON

* *This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score.*

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